■ Sports / A28
Spurs take Game 1 of NBA Finals

■ Business / B1
Gov't sees sale of PNB by September

■ News / A3
They're queer; they're here

■ News / A2
Senators halt 'jueteng' probe for two weeks

■ Super
INQUEST
Jovan Morales' murderer revealed tonight

True to his word, Mikey sues accuser for libel

By Tonette Orejas
PHOTOGRAPHER Lauren Bolt

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Taking what he called a "bold step" in cleaning his name, Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel Arroyo yesterday filed a P5.1-million libel suit against "jueteng" whistle-blower Sandra Cam for

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

'Pirates' have 'GMA tapes,' but they're not selling yet

By Christian V. Esguerra

Saturday, June 11, 2005 ● 40 pages ● Vol. 29 / No. 183
website: www.inq7.net

'Mother of all tapes' surfaces

Former NBI exec says GMA cheated

By Sara V. Quismundo and Dona Z. Pazzibugan

A FORMER deputy chief of the National Bureau of Investigation confessed yesterday to claim he has "the mother of all tapes" allegedly showing President Macapagal-Arroyo fixed last year's elections and said they were provided by friends in the military intelligence service.

Samuel Ong appeared at an evening news conference at a secret locale, then called by the opposition. It coincided with the announcement by Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Efren Abu over lunch with reporters that the military intelligence unit, Isafp, is under investigation in connection with the wiretapping allegations.

"This is a serious matter," Abu said, but he declined to say who among the Isafp staff are under investigation. "Everyone is a suspect," he said.

On Wednesday, Malacañang announced that Isafp chief Brig. Gen. Mario Quevedo had been sacked. No explanation was made.

Looking uneasy and saying he had been disciplined the last five days since the bizarre take of the tapes emerged, Ong said he came out because he felt his life was in danger and thought he should let the people know they were involved in the last election. He called on Mr. Arroyo to resign.

"I am calling on Susan Roces because this tape would show that her husband was cheated," Ong said, referring to the late actor Fernando Poe Jr., who lost to Mrs Arroyo. Opposition politicians broadcast snippets before the news conference for supporters to tune in the Hukbo club, but only several hundred showed up by nightfall.

Ong moved before a packed crowd of reporters one of which he said were four "master tapes" given to him by an Isafp agent. He said the three other tapes were in the hands of wealthy businessmen."

Ong said the tapes contain the wiretapped telephone conversa-

SAMMY Ong, former deputy director of the National Bureau of Investigation, waves what he claims to be a master tape of a purported conversation between President Macapagal-Arroyo and Comelec Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano allegedly talking about fixing the 2004 elections.

LOOKING unruffled amid the scandal swirling around her and her family, President Macapagal-Arroyo spent part of Friday receiving the credentials of ambassadors from different foreign countries.

US standing by GMA, says she's not at risk

By Mikko Dizon

Sen Chiz Escudero (Nationalist Peoples Coalition) said in a television interview yesterday the United States fully supports President Macapagal-Arroyo's government and downplayed fears of an impending coup attempt against the administration.

"We unequivocally support the duly elected government," Abunawan told MSC. He said he also believes the controversy surrounding the alleged wiretapping of Mr Arroyo's telephone conversation precipitating to those that she attempted to rig last year's elections "has been blown out of proportion."

Malacañang has said the tape had been tampered with in an opposition attempt to destabilize the government.

"There's no real risk to her administration and there should not be one," Abunawan said, adding that the current situation is not even "bad at all" to the current government.

However, the diplomat added that the current situation "is very serious because it distracts people from the real problem that we should be dealing with."

"The Filipino people deserve better than a comedy-fest of scandals," he said.

Abunawan said he heard of the existence of the supposed recording in late April or early May but considered it as a "rumor." He said no one in the US Embassy ever had a copy of the tape.

"To be honest we didn't take it that seriously. We couldn't disregard it completely and we reported it back to Washington after we (assessed) it for that. But again if we took every rumor and every allegation seriously, we'd have no time for anything else," he said.

Asked what the US Embassy's assessment of the tape was, Abunawan replied: "The assessment was that there might be an actual tape and are just told

Pimentel's 'resign' call premature, say GMA allies

ADMINISTRATION senators yesterday assailed Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. for demanding President Macapagal-Arroyo's resignation, but party-list representatives were a step further and urged their colleagues to lay the groundwork for a "national coalition government."

Sen. Richard Gordon questioned Pimentel's motive in calling on Thursday for the resignation not only of Mr Arroyo but also of Vice President Noli de Castro. "There are certain senators who seem to be president through the backdoor," he said by phone.

Senators Miriam Defensor-Santiago and Ma Ronna said Pimentel's call was "premature" because the President had not been directly accused of receiving "jueteng" bribes and other crimes.

But Representatives Teodoro Casiño of Bayan Muna and Crispin Beltran and Rafael Mariano of Anakpawis said the President was bound to step down—either voluntarily or by force—and civilian leaders should prepare the turnover because that set up a crisis.

Beltran said that De Castro would not be a "viable alternative" to Mr Arroyo and that even a "snap" election would not work because the people wanted "a change in the system, not just another round of musical chairs among the members of the ruling elite."

He said "anti-Arroyo forces" should work for the establishment of a national coalition government, "to set the committee" composed of "anti-corruption and pro-people reform forces and groups that will coordinate on a general plan of action as to reform the Philippines should go in the coming weeks."

Elsewhere, the Kilusang Bayan's Network for the Environment (Kalikasan PNE) and the Alyansa Pabilo Ibilang Teachers Association (APITA) added their voices to the call for Mr Arroyo to step down.

Speaking for the so-called Jornel Opposition (Jusc), Leo Amarro said they would take part in the "national day of mourning" prayer rally scheduled today at the Liwasang Bonifacio in Manila.

"We are in support of any motion that will put a peaceful end to all these controver-

People power ouster of Arroyo not likely

By Luis V. Teodoro
Contributor

COMMENTARY

THE NEXT few days—or the unfolding 72 hours, as administration sources themselves say—may indeed decide the fate of the Arroyo administration. But its entire through another People Power uprising seems unlikely at this point, and the political crisis may very well be resolved in its favor.

Both People Power I and II succeeded in removing presidents because of a confluence of several factors. While some of these factors already exist, some are conspicuously missing—most strongly among them the absence of any consensus among the groups arrayed against President Macapagal-Arroyo as to how to remove her, and more so what should come thereafter.

In 1986 there was no doubt as to who would replace Ferdinand Marcos. Corazon Aquino was not only Ninoy Aquino's widow as well as the probable winner in the "snap" election. She also had the moral ascendancy, the mod-

10 Senate allies, 2 bishops spurn GMA

By Jaime Laboy Jamillano and Christian V. Esguerra

SIX SUPPORTERS' lords-in-bank rebuffs at a time when she needed allies most.

First, Iloilo Roman Catholic bishops spurned President Macapagal-Arroyo's appeal to call off today's planned "national day of mourning" protests.

Then, 16 administration senators backed out of a dinner she had wanted to host for them at the Palace, unaware privy to the rare events and the business.

"I choose Cha (Sen.) Malacañang) can treat in peace. But since the senators did not go to the dinner, they will party executives," an administration senator said.

Another senior administration senator spoke of seeing signs of a beleaguered Palace as Mr Arroyo confronted allegations left and right.

"They are now circling the wagon," the senior senator said.

Malacañang's secretary to administration senators in a dinner on Wednesday was invoked with a Malacañang coffee of party-to the opposition, Inquirer sources said.

The senators' unbroken bilateral allegations of involvement of some members of the First Family in "jueteng" payoffs and the release of an audio tape suggesting that Mrs Arroyo had rigged the May 2004 presidential election.

Malacañang and the senators have denied the alleged time as part of an opposition plot to discredit the presidency.

The Inquirer learned from four administration senators that Malacañang had invited all 14 majority senators to the planned dinner with Mr Arroyo. It was not known if the dinner pushed through with-

out the 10 who backed out.

An opposition senator, on the other hand, said he got a call from a Malacañang emissary reminding the President's office he could

The opposition senator said he got the call last Monday, about the same time the President's political adviser, Gabriel Claudio, made the invitation to the administration senators.

The senior administration senator said one of the purposes of the Malacañang dinner was to call the administration lawmakers to help handle the pairing investigation that has produced allegations about payoffs to the President's husband, son and brother-in-law.

"The sentiment in Malacañang is that the administration senators are losing ceiling. They should play a more active role in the hearings," the senator said.

The senator said Malacañang wanted the

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SATURDAY, JUNE 11, 2005

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

Senators halt 'jueteng' probe for two weeks

'In aid of destabilization'

By Michaella Ulloa

A LAWMAKER yesterday rallied on the Senate to maintain suppressed big-time jueteng lords who are on top of the food chain of the multi-billion peso jueteng operations.

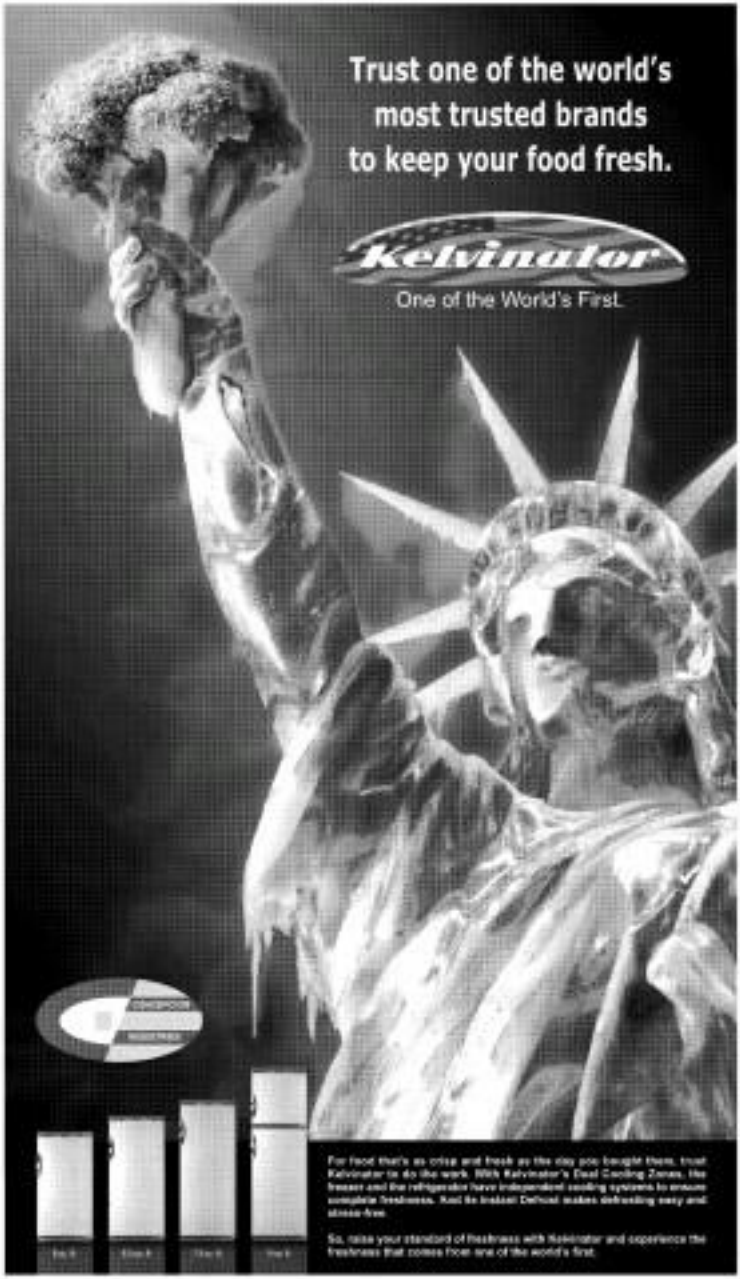
"Where are the lords? Let's send in the lords," said Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay.

"We have a situation where those who have been dragged into the controversy await their chance to answer the charges against them, but before they do so, the committee allows a turn witness to hastily shoot from allegations against new persons. If this keeps up, the number of witnesses and resource persons to be called may be far too many to fit in the Senate session hall," he said.

Pichay said the Senate joint committee investigating jueteng should allow those named as jueteng lords by Willie Revilla Mayor, Richard Garcia and Emilio Cantos to speak out.

Otherwise, the inquiry would be "in aid of destabilization," said Pichay, stressing that the probe had degenerated into a continuing smear campaign against the administration.

"These proceedings are supposedly in aid of legislation or that once and for all, lasting solutions can be found to prevent illegal gambling and the attendant problem of corruption. But what is now happening is that the Senate is allowing a constant parade of dubious characters and admitted criminals who are proffering hearsay and unsubstantiated evidence, against a growing number of alleged jueteng cockfloors and payola recipients," he said.



By Juliet Labog-Javellana

THE TWO Senate committees conducting the jueteng investigation have decided to halt the probe for at least two weeks, a day after a jueteng bagmen-turn claim that the delivered jueteng payola to President Macapagal-Arroyo's congressman son and brother-in-law.

Sen. Manuel Villar, the chair of the public order committee, said the hearings are tentatively set to resume on June 27.

The postponement of the hearings immediately drew charges of a cover-up from the opposition.

Administration senators are pressing for a termination of the investigation, which has seen three jueteng witnesses testifying that the President's husband Jose Miguel "Mike," son Jose Miguel "Mikey" and brother-in-law Ignacio "Iggy" have been on the receiving end of payoffs from the illegal numbers game.

Senators Francis Pangilinan and Richard Gordon have said the investigation should be terminated.

Hurting the economy

Sen. Mar Roxas said those accused in the jueteng payola, including members of the First Family should open their bank accounts to prove their innocence on charges of accepting bribes from jueteng lords.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye yesterday said Malacañang was for bringing the investigations to its conclusion but not dragging it indefinitely as it was hurting the economy.

The Senate can now make its recommendations, including those who should be prosecuted, Bunye told an INQ7 radio interview.

He said the Senate hearings were being conducted in aid of legislation, particularly to "amend and refine" existing laws.

"But as drag the hearings on...confer distrust and dampen investor confidence in the country," Bunye said.

He noted that the stock market and the peso took a beating the other day.

"So this would not be good for the country in the long run," he said.

Opposition Sen. Serge Osmeña said the administration was trying to cover up the involvement of the First Family in the jueteng scam.

"But holding the hearings is like not opening the second envelope," Osmeña said.

Osmeña was referring to the Senate impeachment trial of deposed President Estrada whose allies voted against the opening of a second set of bank documents believed to contain damning evidence against him.

This led to the collapse of the impeachment trial and the second Edsa people power uprising that drove from office of Mr. Estrada.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said he accepted the majority decision but warned that terminating the hearings would enrage the public.

Information overload

Villar said his committee and that of Sen. Manuel Lapid's that are conducting the joint investigation need some time off to process the torrential of information produced by the past three hearings.

He said the senators also needed to attend to engagements during the long congressional break which started yesterday.

Villar, who said the majority was not trying to suppress the investigation, said the minority senators and Archbishop Oscar Cruz who brought the three jueteng witnesses agreed to the two-week break.

Pangilinan and Gordon said it was about time the Senate investigation was terminated.

"Our economy is hurting from too much publicizing...After yesterday's Senate hearing, there seems to be enough testimonies [for the committees] to make their recommendations. The hearings should now come to an end," Pangilinan said in a statement.

Pangilinan said that if evidence warranted it, the two committees can recommend the filing of charges against "against all those implicated regardless of who they are."

Gordon said the Senate should cease its investigation because it was not a prosecutorial arm.

"As far as I'm concerned, we should just refer this to the DOJ [Department of Justice]," Gordon said.

Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago earlier called for the termination of the hearings, saying the Senate does not have the jurisdiction or competence to conduct a criminal prosecution.

Roxas said that up until jueteng bagmen-turned-witness Sandra Cam testified in the Senate the other day, all jueteng allegations were mere hearsay.

Cam testified that she personally handed jueteng payola money to Mikey and Iggy Arroyo.

After raising coup specter, AFP chief says it's not serious

By Dona Pazzibugan

PRIDE from his confirmation by the Commission on Appointments, Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Efren Abu yesterday made a turnaround and downplayed the destabilization threat he spoke of earlier.

Abu said yesterday no active military officers are involved in alleged fresh recruitment attempts among the ranks to rebel against the government.

He said only the retired generals who have been critical of the Arroyo administration, led by RIO-vow old former defense secretary Fortunato Abat, are on the military's watch list.

"You have been in this business for so long, you always ask me (how serious the destabilization threat is) since I became the chief of staff. Hindi naman ganoon (It's not that serious," Abu told reporters yesterday.

"You see the same people, (retired major general Fortunato) Abat, (retired brigadier general Angel) Saburag, (retired commodore Ismael) Aquart" criticizing the government, he added.

"Among the active (military officers) we are not monitoring anyone. It's not needed because there's really no threat from the active personnel because as I have said, they are following the chain of command," Abu advised.

On Sunday, Abu disclosed that a new destabilization plot was afoot.

He issued a rare press statement saying they have intelligence reports "about continuing efforts among certain sectors to destabilize our democratic system, discredit the political leadership, involve members of the uniformed services to engage in insidious acts and encourage the people to withdraw their allegiance from the duly constituted government."

He spoke about a destabilization plot while Malacañang was reeling from a scandal linking members of the First Family to "lambing."

PNP can't run after Mosqueda

By Luige A. del Puerto

POLICE can no longer run after Reminton Mosqueda, the retired police official accused of receiving millions in "jueteng" payoffs.

"It is unfortunate that these allegations came out when he is already out of service," said Philippine National Police spokesperson Chief Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil.

"We no longer have jurisdiction over him. If he were still an officer, we could investigate and charge him administratively," he said, quoting the police's legal service.

The PNP is investigating to see once more could raised in the jueteng controversy. They will be summoned to the Directorate for Investigation and Detective Management to air their side.

What the police can do now is wait for further developments, such as if Mosqueda is formally charged in court, Bataoil said.

The Anti-Money Laundering Council (Amlac) may also look into his finances in the same way that the Bureau of Internal Revenue is looking into the finances of suspected jueteng lords.

But Bataoil maintained that the so far, the allegations against Mosqueda remain to be "mere allegations."

For the meantime, the police will leave it to the Senate to investigate the retired officer, he said.

Sancho Chiu, a confessed "jueteng bagwoman," had testified during the Senate inquiry into the illegal numbers game that she had collected millions for Mosqueda when he was still regional chief of the Bicol Police.

Mosqueda has denied the allegations, calling them a "bizarre lie" and "a product of (Chiu's) wild imagination."

Bataoil also disclosed that Mosqueda's retirement benefits are safe, for now.

Only a court order can cut his benefits, he said.

They're queer; they're here

TOM Filicia is one of America's top 100 interior designers. Kyan Douglas has been named one of People Magazine's 50 Most Beautiful People.

They're queer.

They're here.

Filicia, the design diva; and Douglas, the grooming guru in the phenomenal Emmy Award-winning reality show "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy," arrived in Manila yesterday for a series of consultation clinics dubbed "Tres Fab Idalls Welcome Tres Fab Guys."

The two belong to the "Fab Five," a gay quintet whose mission as captured on cable television is to straighten out one supposedly straight guy per week by holding his hand through a total transformation — a package that includes personal hygiene, grooming, behavior, home makeover, cooking, and introduction to at least one culture of pursuit.

Ayala Land Inc. and Brown Specialties Inc. are the duo's hosts. Filicia, who has done the homes of some of the world's highest-profile celebrities, will be at the Makati Trust Center today at 10 a.m. to open an exhibit of the Philippine School of Interior Design. He will then conduct a discussion on sprucing up the home.

Douglas, author of the best-selling "Beautiful: Secrets for Women to Look Great and Feel Fabulous," is visiting Greenbelt 3. During the consultation, he is expected to talk about the makeover of three Filipinos that he personally dressed, and give beauty and well-being tips.

Army colonel sacked for e-mail vs AFP resort in Boracay

By Doris Franklogen

An AFP colonel has been sacked as brigade commander for criticizing a controversial resort project that the military top brass is pushing up as commercial in Boracay.

Col. Ricardo Morales was relieved as commander of the 639th Infantry Brigade based in Masbate, Bureau Oct. Some yesterday, the same day his e-mail message criticizing the project was reported in the media.

Armed Col. Lt. Gen. Generoso Senga recommended the relief of Morales while was immediately approved by AFP Chief Gen. Efren Abu.

"He is being relieved for his lack of good judgment and indiscretion as a senior commander. He did not set a good example to our officers and men," said Lt. Gen. Ildefonso Iñiguez, the AFP deputy chief.

"As a responsible officer, he should have been aware that such [a] message could reach the public. He misinformed and subjected to a lot of misinterpretation," Abu said.

Morales questioned the construction of the 68-room military resort in Boracay to an e-mail to an e-mail group consisting of Philippine Military Academy graduates. Morales is a member of the PMA class of 1977.

The construction, which began shortly after Abu became AFP chief last October, is still going on.

Abu has denied involvement in the project. He said the resort project was the idea of Lt. Gen. Emmanuel Teodosio, the chief of the AFP Central Command.

Teodosio said the resort was funded by donations from an NGO to give soldiers and their families a place to stay while on rest and recreation in the renovated island resort.

Morales wrote in his e-mail message: "The item has come but all good men to come to the aid of their society. The time for talking is over; the time for action is now. How can the 68-room resort in Boracay improve the AFP's capability to fight 12,000,000 moro here? Who determined this priority? We have hospitals without medicines [remember the late Senator Villanueva?] and they spend money for this resort?"

Lt. Col. Dennis Villanueva, a battalion commander, reportedly died to death after losing his in a mortar attack by rebels in Patikul, Sulu last February.

Morales' message went further: "But the top leaders in the AFP reportedly the Muslim officers [Teodosio] who commands two Army divisions allowed this drawn their insensitivity to the needs and suffering of the men in the field.

Morales was part of the Ambisyonarayang Alyansang Makatarungan (HAM) that unsuccessfully opposed the Marcos dictatorship in 1986.

He was among the soldiers assigned by the pro-Marcos military before the Oust Joha people power revolution.

Joha said Morales had warned up to writing the e-mail and "must whatever he said," "was said in his own defense that it was a private communication.

But Joha said the internet was "a public domain."

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Saturday, June 11, 2005
St. Barnabas, Apostle

1st Reading: Acts 11:21-26; 13:1-3
Gospel: Matthew 10:7-13

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Go and proclaim this message: The kingdom of heaven is near. Heal the sick, bring the dead back to life, cleanse the lepers, and drive out demons. You received this as a gift, so give it as a gift. Do not carry any gold, silver or copper in your purses. Do not carry a traveler's bag, or an extra shirt, or sandals, or walking stick: workers deserve their living.

'When you come to a town or a village, look for a worthy person and stay there until you leave.

'As you enter the house, send it peace. If the people in the house deserve it, your peace will be on them; if they do not deserve it, your blessing will come back to you.'

Commentary

This is the work of the disciples of Jesus, imitating Jesus himself: to live and proclaim that the kingdom of justice for all and peace is near. And this task, living the dead back to life, cleanse the lepers and drive out demons. And do this as graciously as we have known the power of God in our own lives. It appears to be impossible. The world of today provide medicine and health care for all. Despite, living hope exists. Despite for people and their children with jobs and housing, accept the outsider, the migrant and the stranger and promote welcoming. Reconcile a life with others and wait and help others to reconcile, embrace and organize that is accepted as norm in so many places. And for those called to be missionaries [we all are in some small ways] travel radically free, depending on others' hospitality, open to and searching always to welcome as you come. But today we are men who preached Jet Paul and stood with him, helping him to remain constant in his conversion. We are to look not only to ourselves but to aide others around.

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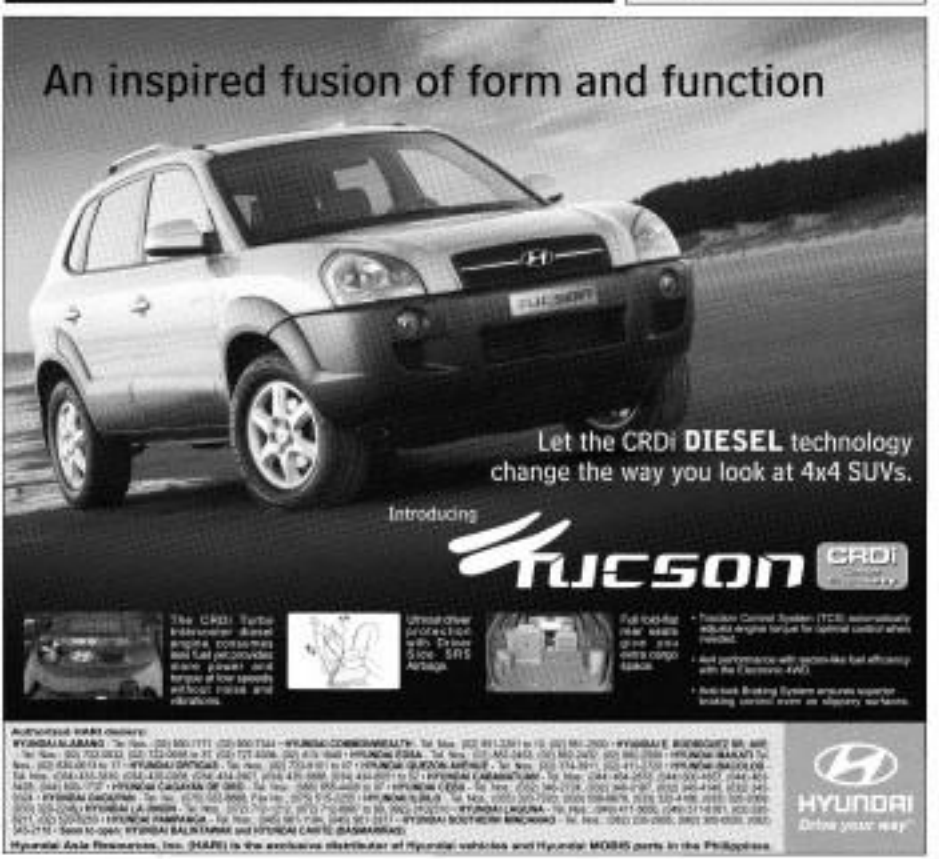

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'People power fatigue' will save GMA, say analysts

By Doris C. Dumlao

RATHER than a popular revolt or coup d'etat, analysts only see a delay in the government's economic reform agenda from the barrage of allegations of election fixing and illegal gambling payoffs rolling the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Filipinos are growing tired of "people power" and now unlikely to flock to the streets to topple Ms Arroyo, analysts of the big foreign banks said yesterday.

"People power fatigue has set in and we believe it will take stronger charges than we have seen to overcome it," said Singapore-based ING analyst Tim Condon.

"The latest testimony is not as compelling as that which brought down President Estrada and does not directly tarnish the President," Condon said in his economic and policy watch commentary on the Philippines dated June 9.

In another report, Anton Periquet of Deutsche Regis said the extra-constitutional avenue for a regime change was an extremely narrow one.

"Filipinos have grown tired of taking to the streets to sack their leaders only to discover time and again that their problems go beyond individual personalities," Periquet said in "The Regis Report" dated June 9.

A Senate inquiry has heard allegations that the President's husband, son and brother-in-law took kickbacks from jueteng.

This week, allegedly wiretapped recordings surfaced that the opposition said bolstered its claims the President cheated in last year's election.

The allegations have been denied by the President and her family.

Condon said until very recently it seemed the jueteng scandal would die down because of the inability of those driving the investigation to produce a star witness similar to Estrada's drinking buddy, Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson who claimed to have personally handed over dirty money to the jailed ex-President.

But even the testimony of jueteng "bagwoman" Sandra Cam that she personally handed jueteng kickbacks to the President's son and brother-in-law was less than compelling.

"At this point little is known about Ms Cam, which lessens the impact of her testimony compared with that of Singson's against President Estrada," said Condon.

PRESIDENT ARROYO

The ING analyst said three ingredients were necessary for another successful people power uprising—support from the people, military and the Church.

"The people are unlikely to back another people power, in our view. President Arroyo's poll numbers are horrible but that is not going to be enough to reduce the inertia keeping people off the streets," Condon said.

He said the two previous people power changes of government had done little to fix the problems they meant to, including corruption, poverty, falling living standards and the peace and order situation.

Condon said the Catholic Church was also unlikely to support a people power revolt as the President was a devout Catholic who had leaned heavily on Church support to take the presidency from Estrada in 2001.

"She has been careful not to clash with the Church's wishes and there is no sign of any serious rift, a few zealous priests notwithstanding," he said.

Condon also ruled out the possibility of the Army supporting a regime change, noting the top military officers were all Arroyo appointees while the junior officers were "badly burned" after the failed Oakwood mutiny of 2003 and were presumably wary of another attempt.

The ING analyst said the bottom line was: "The current political turmoil will fade unless more compelling evidence directly implicating the President is produced."

Nicholas Bibby, strategist at Barclays Capital in Singapore, believes the scandal "will blow over."

"Then we'll move on to other business. It's just one of these short-term volatility things we see, not just in the Philippines but in a lot of emerging markets," he said.

The stock market seems to think the worst could be over, rallying to finish 2.1 percent higher yesterday after falling 7.4 percent over the past three sessions amid concerns over political stability.

Still, trading was light with at least one more hurdle to clear.

The military is on red alert for any trouble over the weekend, when the country marks its independence day. Authorities have warned that unauthorized rallies will not be allowed.

The opposition likely will be looking for a way to turn the holiday mood sour.

Yesterday, about 3,000 demonstrators marched near Malacañang, waving placards that read "Gloria corrupt, resign now."

People are angry and there are grumblings in the military, which has spawned at least a dozen attempted coups since 1986.

But there is little sign yet of the united public outrage that toppled the dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1986 with huge street protests and then drove out Estrada as President in 2001.

"Critical mass has not been reached and we believe the Arroyo government will continue to limp along for the time being," Manila-based risk consultancy Pacific Strategies & Assessments said in a report to clients.

The opposition has been trying to whip up public anger over the state of the economy and the allegations of corruption.

But Ms Arroyo's rivals have problems of their own with fragmented parties and few palatable alternatives as leader.

"Today's list of alternatives is particularly uninspiring. Investors should ignore the noise until further notice. Or better yet, bottom-fish (Philippine stocks) on any panic," Periquet said.

Periquet said any opposition-sponsored impeachment initiative against the President was "almost impossible" to prosper given the "feudal, personality-driven ways" of Congress.

He added that both upper and lower chambers of Congress were controlled by the administration. *With a report from Reuters*

People power ouster of GMA not likely

From page A.1

dle-class constituency and the support of the king-making sectors of Philippine society, including the United States, business, and the anti-Marcos wing of the military bureaucracy.

In 2001 Ms Arroyo was not only the constitutionally designated successor of Joseph Estrada. Although she did not enjoy the same levels of enthusiasm that Corazon Aquino did, she was also acceptable to the middle class, business, and, eventually, the police and the military.

Vice President Noli de Castro, while not yet tainted by the widespread belief that Ms Arroyo cheated in the last election, is unacceptable to the middle class, the anti-Arroyo wing of the military, and much of civil society and business.

The various groups arrayed against Ms Arroyo thus have their own preferred successors, among them the civilian-military junta that the retired generals favor, the council of leaders that militant groups have proposed, and the various opposition schemes that now include returning Estrada to power and Senate President Franklin Drilon's assuming the role of a caretaker president.

Disparity of interests

The disagreement over the succession issue reflects the disparity of interests and agendas among the retired and active military officers, the various wings of the opposition, the Left, and the Catholic bishops.

But it is also the result of middle-class disappointment with People Power I and II, neither of which led to the social and political reforms both promised.

The irony is that Ms Arroyo, the beneficiary of People Power II, is now also the unintended beneficiary of widespread disappointment with People Power. Not only the failure of the groups and forces now against her to agree on the succession question is to her benefit. So is their disagreement over how to remove her.

While the People Power option remains an option for the Left and other militant groups, for example, the military favors a coup. Impeachment has been bruited about as the constitutional though far-fetched option, given the opposition's lack of numbers in the House of Representatives.

Impeachment is, in any case, a long process that may not necessarily lead to the series of events that eventually ousted Estrada in 2001.

No guarantee

But while the Arroyo administration's removal seems unlikely at this point, its surviving this crisis does not guarantee that it will serve out its term until 2010.

Disenchantment with the regime and its massive loss of credibility and popular support are realities that the surveys on Ms Arroyo's negative approval ratings have confirmed. Equally telling are the cracks within the regime's own ranks, as evidenced by the resignations of several key officials last summer, and, lately, the possibility that its own intelligence agencies may have tapped Ms Arroyo's cell phone and recorded her alleged conversation with a Commission on Elections official.

There is also the US government's previous expression of reservations over her reliability as an ally, given her decision to withdraw the Philippine humanitarian contingent from Iraq last year, and her alleged recent flirtation with China.

Although it is true that US support is not the only factor that decided the outcomes of the political crises of 1986 and 2001, it is nevertheless a crucial one. Various sectors including the military take their cue from the US Embassy, as has recently been made obvious.

The police and military support that the regime supposedly has could be as illusory as that which Marcos and Estrada enjoyed in 1986 and 2001, respectively. Police and military support is among the most unreliable in Philippine politics, and likely to melt under the pressure of various forces, among them the police and military leadership's perceptions of who can best guarantee their interests.

Worst crisis

It is true that the present crisis is the worst that has ever afflicted the Arroyo administration since 2001. It is in fact the worst crisis any administration since Marcos' has ever experienced. But it may not necessarily lead to the current administration's removal.

Given, however, the current state of its credibility and support, its incorrigible incapacity to achieve much of anything, its increasingly oppressive character, and the runaway corruption metastasizing within it, its surmounting the present crisis will not mean stability until 2010.

The likelihood is that, as its failures accumulate and as its legitimacy remains doubtful at best, it will be besieged by crisis after crisis in the years to come. Any one of those crises can lead to its ouster, assuming that the points of differences among the groups opposed to it—among them the question of how to remove Ms Arroyo and who will succeed her—are resolved.

This is an administration so damaged that its ouster can only be a matter of time.

Luis V. Teodoro is a professor of journalism at the University of the Philippines.

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DAY, JUNE 11, 2005

exec

By Jerome Aning

FOREIGN tourists are worried about their safety in this crisis-wracked country, according to Philippine Tourism Authority general manager Robert Dean Barbers.

He said a number of them had been phoning his office to ask if it was safe for them to visit, and warned that the recovering tourism industry might suffer yet another setback if the political turmoil over the "jueteng" and wiretapping scandals would continue.

"There is too much politics going on right now and it is not doing the country any good," Barbers said. "It would be better if we rally behind this administration on the significant growth in our economy instead of bringing down the government for certain political gains."

Barbers said Robert Joseph Lim, chair of the National Association of Independent Travel Agencies, had also relayed to him the reluctance of foreigners to travel to the country in the light of the current turmoil.

He lamented the negative impact of such worries on the government's economic program.

He said that instead of being united "to focus on poverty alleviation and improving the economy," the nation had become "a venue for political circus acts."

Barbers warned that the substantial achievements in tourism brought about by efforts to promote the Philippines in the Asean region, Japan, China, United States and some European countries would "dissipate" if "unfounded accusations" against the administration continued to be "sensationalized."

"Let us put these issues in proper perspective and bring them to the proper authorities. These allegations must not be used by certain sectors through trial by publicity for their own political gains," he said.

Barbers cited reports in the business sector saying that the Arroyo administration's being buffeted by one political controversy after another had caused reluctance among foreign investors to put in the much needed financial boost to the economy.

15 hurt in flight to HK

HONG KONG—Fifteen people were hurt after a Cathay Pacific plane hit strong turbulence on its way to Hong Kong from Manila, the airline said on Friday.

The injured, including seven crew members and eight passengers, suffered scratches and bruises, and were taken to hospital for treatment.

The plane, carrying 352 passengers, landed safely in Hong Kong just after noon. *AFP*

Peso tumbles to 55.20 to the dollar

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO yesterday tumbled to 55.20 to $1, its lowest finish in four months, on concerns that corruption allegations against President Macapagal-Arroyo were undermining her administration.

The currency closed 54.95 to the dollar on Thursday. Trading volume at the Philippine Dealing System yesterday remained high at $405.35 million.

"The markets don't like uncertainty," said Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Officer in Charge Armando Tetangco Jr.

"The earlier the noise dissipates, the better for us because only then can the market focus again on economic fundamentals," he added.

The peso has been steadily sinking against the US dollar since the start of the year, hitting a high of 53.94 to $1 on March 15, on the back of strong portfolio inflows.

The financial markets, however, turned jittery due to political uncertainties arising from allegations that Ms Arroyo had rigged the presidential elections last year to secure a six-year term and that her husband, eldest son and brother-in-law had been accepting payoffs from "jueteng" operators.

"Domestic political jitters contribute to take the spotlight," said Nestor de Guzman, head of trading at the Union Bank of the Philippines. "Everyone's attention is fastened on how it unfolds and whether it will be resolved soon. It's a tough call."

De Guzman said the pressure on the peso could further increase as the season for remittances from overseas Filipinos was coming to an end.

The Monetary Board approved the measures that allowed the peso to appreciate to the 53-54 to $1 levels in the past months, BSP officials said.

"We were doing quite well in terms of growth, external flows, level of GIR (gross international reserves), foreign investments and OFW remittances. Also, the markets reacted positively the tax reform measures instituted by the government," Tetangco said.

The BSP said it was watching the foreign exchange movement. It said it continued to aim to rationalize volatility in the foreign exchange market, but declined to confirm whether it had intervened to support the peso in recent days.

"As in the past, the policy of the BSP is basically designed to rationalize as much as possible the volatility, but we don't go against fundamentals," Tetangco told reporters.

Political tensions, Tetangco said, had been aggravating the pressure exerted on the peso by the strengthening of the US dollar against regional currencies. He was, however, quick to add that there was no speculative attack against the peso.

After hitting a low of 55.30 to $1 on Jan. 26, the peso started appreciating, hitting the 54 to $1 level for the first time since October 2003 on a string of favorable news, including a record gross domestic product growth for 2004 and the country's inclusion in the list of preferable investment sites of California Public Employees Retirement System. It breached the 53 to $1 mark in March.

In the meantime, foreign portfolio investments inflows, which fueled the peso's appreciation since the start of the year, started to dwindle after peaking in March.

BSP data released yesterday indicated that the net inflows of "hot" money for the month of May reached $90.7 million, the lowest monthly portfolio investments inflows so far this year.

The net inflows last month paled in comparison with the inflows of $540.5 million in January, $334.7 million in February, $552.1 million in March and $329.8 million in April.

For the week ending May 27, Tetangco said there was a net inflow of $11.6 million, extending the $9.07 million inflows in the previous week. With a report from Reuters

GMA rallies forces, hits 'marauders of democracy'

By Christine O. Avendaño

EMBATTLED President Macapagal-Arroyo vowed to defeat "the marauders of democracy" as she tried to rally her political forces amid scandals buffeting her administration.

"All of us declared our support for [the President]," Speaker Jose de Venecia told reporters after Ms Arroyo met Lakas leaders and members over dinner at Malacañang. "We are against any rules-consolidated or extra-legal moves to bring down the duly elected government ... We do not wish to become a banana republic."

Ms Arroyo is chair of Lakas, the country's biggest party which represents 50 percent of all elected officials.

De Venecia assured unnamed "shortsighted" of "avoiding a full House political crisis."

But Lakas leaders and members told Ms Arroyo at the dinner that "we will not allow this to happen and that we will support [her] all the way," De Venecia said.

The Speaker also stressed that Lakas was on alert.

"We are obviously mobilizing our forces. We are telling everybody to be on the alert, to be vigilant," he said. "We are telling our neighbors, our friends, allies, our colleagues that we have a duly constituted democracy that is being buffeted by so many disserved scenes that are created by the forces of destabilization."

Foreign support

He added: "You never know. It's better to be vigilant."

De Venecia said the meeting noted what he called "the support for the duly constituted authority" which he said had been expressed by the US and Chinese embassies, as well as by diplomats from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) and the European Union.

"She [Ms Arroyo] was in a very high spirit. I thought we were facing a demoralized camp but the mood was so strong," De Venecia said.

Civil disobedience

Asked about a campaign of civil disobedience supposedly being planned by Ms Arroyo's opponents, the Speaker said: "I think it will not succeed."

"I think the campaign of the destabilizers will just fizzle out ... It will die a natural death."

Lakas member Antipas Vice Gov. Rhodora Cadiao told reporters that the President told them to be "stronger because we're the majority party."

Cadiao said that Mr Arroyo also said that what was happening now was a result of her being able to complete the first phase of her reform agenda.

It was Lakas leaders who sought the meeting with Ms Arroyo, said Gabriel Claudio, presidential adviser for political affairs.

The dinner was held four days after the Chief Executive met with leaders and members of the Liberal Party, also in Malacañang.

Lakas represents 50 percent of all elected officials across the nation, including 40 governors, 80 congressmen, 80 city mayors and 750 municipal mayors.

Noli unfit for top post, House leader says

By Michael Lim Ubac

TESDA President Nolli de Castro is an unfit replacement for President Macapagal-Arroyo should she resign, according to the administration coalition in the House.

"The majority will stick with the President because there is no [other] viable option," House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles said yesterday. He said the consensus of the majority was that no one—not even De Castro, Ms Arroyo's constitutional successor—can be "acceptable" alternative.

"Who will take over [the government]? Who is the acceptable man or woman or military man? Arroyo (Gloria) Cabinet? Do you take any? Who? Let's forget the Constitution and that process...who do you think?" Nograles told the ABC news channel.

He warned that the country would "selfdestruct" if an unqualified person seized power from Ms Arroyo.

"The majority in the House will not allow an armed revolution and will insist that Gloria stay and not resign. I'm referring exactly what the majority members of the House are saying," he said.

The lawmaker from Davao said the administration bloc—which groups 229 of the 236-member chamber—would not back a military junta either because it would mean surrendering civilian authority to the generals.

DE CASTRO

"We will not have a role anymore," he said, pointing out that any junta or dictatorship would have Congress padlocked "so that there will be no checks and balances."

As to the threat of another People Power revolt to topple the Arroyo administration, Nograles said the Edsa uprisings only represented "lingered Manilas," and not the whole country.

"Just because mayors in Metro Manila mobilized their forces and went to Edsa, they think [they can] rule the entire Philippines. Even the school [Dominican, Cebu, or Baliod think]," he said. "We will not allow that ... We might as well [recede], anyway. [Members had the resources."

US standing by GMA, says she's not at risk

Washington is stay tuned and we'll let them know if things would develop. And then things have developed."

Asked about widespread media speculation that the US Embassy was the source of the tapes wiretapping to Manila and that they were released to show Washington was distancing itself from the Arroyo administration, Mussomeli said:

"When you think about it logically, it makes no sense at all. The one thing that the US government wants is stability and that is something that does not help that at all ... this case really, we have no connection with this at all.

"I think those who are perpetrating this are brain-dead. It's against anything we want here. We want the rule of law, we want stability and the democratic body. I really don't think it's an issue anymore. I don't believe people think the Americans are involved. Anyone who says so think for 30 seconds and see that," he said.

Romulo welcomes US support

Nevertheless, Mussomeli said should the Philippine government request US assistance in determining the authenticity of the tape, the US Embassy would consider recommending it to Washington.

Foreign Secretary Alberto G. Romulo welcomed the US Embassy official's statement of support and its desire for stability in the country in a statement, Romulo noted that the US next more than 100 volunteers during the May 2004 elections and found that the balloting was "fair and credible."

"My recent meetings with members of the diplomatic corps in the Philippines strongly indicate the continuing support and recognition of the international community for the administration," Romulo said.

Two administration lawmakers also welcomed Mussomeli's statement.

"The clear and unequivocal support by a top US Embassy official should spell the death knell for this particular chapter of the ongoing destabilization efforts by the opposition," Rep. Edcel Lagman said. "This is timely and significant in light of the opposition's ill-fated pull-fraud charges against the President," he added.

Lagman said his sources from the diplomatic community had informed him that opposition figures had tried to get the support of some foreign governments for the ouster of Ms Arroyo but those were "rebuffed in unmistakably."

Rep. Leovy Salapuddin said Mussomeli's statement "should help enlighten" the public about the opposition's "bogus claims" of success fraud. With a report from Philip C. Tubeza

JV'S SCENARIO

If GMA is out, why not Erap?

By Edwin C. Tandoc Jr.

IF PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo steps down, jailed former President Joseph Estrada can take over and establish a "caretaker government."

This is the "ideal scenario" according to Estrada's son Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, saying his father, whom Ms Arroyo replaced in 2001, is the only leader "with the clearest mandate ever."

"[Estrada] would have a council of prominent political leaders [and] establish a caretaker government in the meantime," Ejercito said in a phone interview.

He said his father could unite the country by inviting to the council "influential leaders" like evangelist Eddie Villanueva and opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson, who both lost to Ms Arroyo in the 2004 elections.

He said Estrada could also invite Susan Roces, the widow of Ms Arroyo's dissent rival in last year's elections, the late actor Fernando Poe Jr.

"Based on surveys, the people have trust and confidence in my father even if he is in jail," Ejercito said.

He said the United National Opposition, composed of allies and supporters of both Poe and Estrada, was also prepared "for any eventualities."

Later last night, the ousted president issued a statement urging the people "to spare Gloria Arroyo and her regime through a massive civil disobedience move."

"We the Filipino people cannot be ruled by a proven cheating president," he said. "We the Filipino people, who have the God-given right to choose our leaders freely, cannot allow a cheat for a president."

In an earlier statement, Ejercito joined calls for Ms Arroyo to step down, following the controversies hounding Malacañang.

"With the current political and economic crisis coupled with the scandals rocking the administration, [Ms Arroyo] should now consider stepping down out of deliberation," Ejercito said in a statement.

Opposition Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. had earlier proposed that Ms Arroyo and Vice President Noli de Castro step down to give way for a snap election.

Ms Arroyo, who was then vice president, took over after Estrada was ousted in 2001 during Edsa 2, a few months after he was impeached for allegations linking him to jueteng and other charges like plunder and unexplained wealth.

But this time, the latest jueteng scandal has dragged the names of First Gentleman Mike Arroyo, his son, Pampanga Rep. Mikey Arroyo and his brother Rep. Iggy Arroyo.

Several days ago, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye also released two tapes containing what he said were a wiretapped phone call of Ms Arroyo—one he claimed to be the original, the other, a spliced version.

He warned that the fabricated version was to be used by some segments of the opposition to support allegations that Ms Arroyo cheated during the elections.

But Ejercito said both versions proved that the camp of Ms Arroyo had a "special operation" to ensure her win in the last elections.

"The content confirms speculations that there was massive cheating, that [Ms Arroyo's] wanted to stay in power at all costs," he added.

The Philippine National Police confirmed they had monitored destabilization efforts against the administration.

But Ejercito said there was no need to destabilize the Arroyo government.

FVR calls for unity, sobriety

AMID rumors of unrest in the face of the scandals engulfing President Macapagal-Arroyo and her family, former President Fidel Ramos yesterday called for unity and sobriety.

"We've gone through more difficult times than this and now, so let us not panic. Instead let's stay together. Let's stay united," said the former President, who was interviewed the day during luguterman Sandra Cam alleged in a Senate inquiry that she personally delivered jueteng kickbacks to Ms Arroyo's son and brother in law.

"We are doing a disservice to our people by talking so much about all these negative things," Ramos said in a chance interview at a diplomatic function Thursday night, during which he shared the presidential table with Ms Arroyo.

The two were at a Manila Hotel dinner to mark the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the Philippines and China.

"What is necessary is that we keep united," Ramos said, speaking in a mixture of Filipino and English.

"Let us fix the only ship we're on, which is the Republic of the Philippines," he said.

"We should be plugging the holes of our ship because we're all on board. The problems with some of us is that they keep making new holes. That's not the way to progress in this world," he said. Itali Contreras

IN A RECENT visit, Fidel Ramos calls on President Macapagal-Arroyo and reiterates his support for her administration. With them are Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita and Presidential Political Adviser Gabriel Claudio.

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Ibarra

New Bolivia president calls early polls

SUCRE, Bolivia—Bolivia's supreme court chief, Eduardo Rodríguez, took over as president and called Friday for general elections to try to defuse weeks of turmoil and violent protests in which a miner was shot dead.

Rodríguez, 60, was sworn in as the 84th president at an emergency session of Congress this Thursday. Lawmakers unanimously accepted the resignation of his predecessor, Carlos Mesa, who had offered Wednesday to step down because he could not govern following its fourth year of political crisis.

Lawmakers were forced to convene in this summer in the morning, citing a "lack of guarantees" as demonstrators and security forces clashed in the streets of the colonial capital before and a miners' union leader was shot dead in a small town nearby.

But they met again in the evening to install the new president.

For three weeks, tens of thousands of farmers, workers and indigenous people have clamored on the streets of La Paz and other cities for the nationalization of the gas and oil industry and a more equitable distribution of the country's meager wealth.

Protesters also had demanded the resignation of Mesa, whom they accused of failing to quell the unrest.

Rodríguez urged forces warned they would take action to halt the unrest, which had led the national airline to cancel all domestic flights.

The armed forces chief warned the turmoil could become a "national suicide. We are appealing for calm on the part of all parties... and respect for the constitution," said Admiral Luis Aranda, evading a military intervention.

In his inauguration speech, shortly after midnight, the new president promised to lead the way to elections. "One of my decisions will be to convene that electoral process to renew the representatives of the people," he said.

He did not set a date for the polls, but the constitution stipulates that under current circumstances new elections must be held within six months.

Senate leader Hormando Vaca Diez, who swore in Rodríguez, could have stretched the rest of the former president's term under the constitution, but he turned down the job in favor of the supreme court chief, who was the only official allowed to ordinarily pass.

Picture of Deposed president Mesa (Carlos Mesa, the outgoing president of Bolivia, left, and Eduardo Rodríguez, the country's new president, right, shake hands during the swearing-in ceremony of Rodríguez as the new president of Bolivia, in the city of Sucre, Bolivia, June 10, 2005. Rodríguez was sworn in as president after Congress accepted Mesa's resignation. AFP PHOTO/Aizar RALDES)

Former Deputies president Mario Cossío Cossío, the senior in line after Vaca Diez, did the same.

Immediately after the new president's speech, Evo Morales, a leftist lawmaker leader of coca leaf farmers and one of the most influential protest leaders, urged Rodríguez to promise to nationalize the oil and gas industry and to convene a constitutional assembly. AFP

Terrorists plan to attack Indonesia in advanced stages, Australia says

CANBERRA—Terrorists are in the "very advanced stages" of planning attacks in Indonesia, Australia warned on Friday.

"We continue to receive a stream of credible reporting suggesting that terrorists are in the very advanced stages of planning attacks in Indonesia," the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs said.

"Attacks could occur at any time, anywhere in Indonesia and could be directed at any location frequented by foreigners."

Indonesian officials expressed puzzlement at the latest warning and said they had received no new information recently.

"The police have said repeatedly in recent weeks that a group led by Noordin Mohammad Top, suspected of links to Al Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiyah plans to strike Western-linked targets.

"I don't know presently whether this is a follow-up to previous indications or whether this comes from new facts," police chief Gen. Da'i Bachtiar told reporters. "We can't believe how we respond early."

The warning was posted on the Australian government's travel website, www.smartraveller.gov.au.

"Recent credible reporting suggests that international bombs frequented by Westerners in Jakarta are being targeted in current terrorist planning," the department warned.

A car bomb exploded outside the Australian Embassy in Jakarta on Sept. 9, 2004, killing 9 Indonesians and wounding more than 200 people, while 88 Australians were among the 202 killed in the first nightclub bombings in October 2002.

Indonesian police have said the two Jemaah Islamiyah fugitives might be reaping around Jakarta and recruiting followers for their next operations.

The British Embassy in Indonesia, on its website, has also advised nationals that "terrorists in Indonesia are planning further attacks on Westerners and Western interests." Reuters

TEHRAN'S nuclear ambitions: Iranian currently under construction, is seen at sunset June 9. The United States on Thursday dropped its objections to a third term for the head of the UN nuclear watchdog, Mohamed ElBaradei, and said it would vote for him in an upcoming election. The decision ended a military US campaign against ElBaradei, who is running unopposed for re-election and has widespread international support despite the belief of Bush administration hard-liners that he has been too soft on Iran.

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US abandons bid to block third term for IAEA chief

WASHINGTON—Washington on Thursday ended its opposition to Mohamed ElBaradei serving a third term as the head of the UN nuclear watchdog in a showdown that will allow the Egyptian lawyer to be re-elected next week.

The decision ended a solitary US campaign against ElBaradei, who has widespread international support despite the belief of Bush administration hard-liners that he has been too soft on Iran over suspicions it is pursuing a nuclear bomb.

"We expect, when the vote comes up... that we will join the consensus," state department spokesperson Sean McCormack told reporters after Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice met ElBaradei in Washington.

ElBaradei, who has run the International Atomic Energy Agency since 1997, is now likely to be unanimously approved by the 35 member nations in a board meeting that starts on Monday.

Washington officials opposed ElBaradei by citing its long-held view that heads of UN agencies should serve no more than two terms.

US officials acknowledged Washington reversed its position because it had been unable to erode support for ElBaradei who had also clashed with the United States because he refused in as cop in assertions over Iraq's programs.

Faced with the reality that there was no viable alternative candidate, the Bush administration opted to back ElBaradei—but on the condition he got tougher on Iran, they said.

"You've got to work with what you've got," a state department official, who asked not to be named, said.

When ElBaradei issues periodic assessments of Iran's programs, US hardliners want him to emphasize suspicions until Iranians actively warned of his practice of narrowing a lack of proof. Tehran is pursuing the bomb, another US official said.

During its two-year investigation, the IAEA has found no proof Tehran is developing nuclear weapons, but it has turned many potentially weapons-related activities that Iran concealed from the United Nations, for nearly two decades.

The United States is supporting European negotiations with Iran to curb its nuclear activities but it wants the IAEA to report the Islamic republic to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions should the talks fail.

Iran says its program is peaceful.

Before winning US support, ElBaradei gave a nod to selling the United States on its campaign to persuade skeptical nations Iran is building an atomic bomb under the cover of a nuclear power program. Reuters

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German court orders acquittal of 9/11 suspect

HAMBURG, Germany—Germany's federal appeal court on Thursday ordered the acquittal of a Moroccan resident, Abdelghani Mzoudi, who was accused of involvement in the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

In 2003, Mzoudi was only the second person to be tried anywhere in the world over the suicide plane attacks, but the prosecution case collapsed.

The appeals court rejected an appeal from federal prosecutors for a new trial, citing a lack of evidence.

The court therefore confirmed the judgment of the Hamburg appeals court which acquitted Mzoudi in February 2004, two months after he had been allowed to walk free.

But after Thursday's verdict, the German ministry of justice being announced that it was going ahead with proceedings to expel Mzoudi from Germany and gave him 14 days to leave the country, although he can appeal against this decision.

Hamburg, a northern port city was one of the planning nerve centers of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon which killed around 3,000 people.

Prosecutors had claimed Mzoudi was part of the Hamburg 'cell' run by the presumed leader of the suicide pilots, Mohammed Atta, and called for him to receive a 15-year jail sentence.

Another Moroccan, Mounir El Motassadeq, is currently in the middle of a retrial on charges of assisting the attackers which is being held in Hamburg.

Mzoudi's denies having any knowledge of the planning for the attacks.

In 2004, Mzoudi was cleared of charges of accessory to murder on more than 3,000 counts and membership of a terrorist organization.

Cord Paape, Mzoudi's chief defense lawyer said on that occasion that her client wanted to resume his studies in electronics that were interrupted when he was arrested in October 2002.

However, Mzoudi was subsequently barred from studying in Germany because he did not have permanent residency status.

He acquitted in 2004 came after the court ordered his release from custody in December following fresh claims—believed to come from Ramzi Binalshibh, an alleged al Qaida operative now in US custody—exonerating Mzoudi.

Mzoudiwas the first person worldwide to face court for alleged involvement in the attacks.

He was found guilty in a first trial but the verdict was overturned because US authorities had refused to allow key witnesses in their custody to testify. AFP

Rumsfeld makes 2 turnarounds in one week

WASHINGTON—Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld was publicly out of synch with members of U.S. President George W. Bush's administration twice this week, marking rare aberrations for one of the Cabinet's best at winning the party line.

On Wednesday, Rumsfeld told reporters in Norway that he hadn't heard anyone in the executive branch discuss the possibility of closing the US prison camp for terrorism suspects at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Less than a day later, Bush said he wouldn't rule out closing the prison.

On Sunday, a top Pentagon official traveling with Rumsfeld in Singapore told reporters the Bush administration was considering taking the issue of North Korea's nuclear weapons program before the United Nations. The next day, Rumsfeld said reports of the official's comments were "inaccurate and misleading."

The incidents show the difficulties of coordinating a White House message with Cabinet officials halfway around the world. Both times the messages on a sensitive international issue shifted during the day in Washington, while Rumsfeld's delegation was sleeping thousands of kilometers away.

Rumsfeld has been in similar predicaments before. In the run-up to the Iraq war, he riled Bush aides when he referred to Germany and France as "old Europe" as a time when the Bush administration was trying to build a broad coalition for the eventual invasion.

And last year he aroused acute ire when, during a visit with troops in Iraq, he appeared indifferent to a soldier's concern that US military vehicle armor was inadequate.

"You go to war with the Army you have, not the Army you might want or wish to have," Rumsfeld told a tense, hall-type morning of soldiers. The next day Bush weighed in, saying the troops' concerns were being fully addressed.

"If I were a soldier overseas wanting to defend my country I'd want to ask the secretary of defense the same question," Bush said. "And that is, 'Are we getting the best we can get out?' And they deserve the best."

The dustup this week over Guantanamo Bay started when a Norwegian reporter asked Rumsfeld about calls by former US President Jimmy Carter and other critics to close the Guantanamo Bay prison camp. Rumsfeld, who had condemned a human rights group's calls to close the prison last week, answered that he knew of no one in the Bush administration who was considering shutting down the facility.

Then Bush, in an interview with Fox News Channel, implied that closing Guantanamo was one option he might consider. AP

Sincere Apology

TAI YI in the Philippines sell Fujikoki products, and the advertisement in "2004-2005 Metro Manila Telephone Directory" is misleading as "SOLE DISTRIBUTOR."

We are not "SOLE DISTRIBUTOR" in the Philippines and there is no relationship between Tai Yi and Fujikoki.

For Japan Fujikoki please accept our sincere apology for the trouble caused.

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President: Tsai Yung Fa

The W

China poses growing intelligence threat US ill-equipped to combat

By David Morgan

WASHINGTON—China, whose surging growth feeds an insatiable appetite for US technology, poses a growing intelligence threat that the United States may be ill-equipped to combat, current and former US officials say.

With the Bush administration embroiled in Iraq and the war on terrorism, intelligence experts fear a way be ignoring a determined Chinese attempt to acquire sensitive technology with commercial and military applications through industrial spy networks with potentially disastrous consequences.

Such efforts could eventually erode US economic and military preeminence, officials and analysts said.

The FBI lacks resources to cope, they said. Also, US corporations have business pressure to remember key issues in and development facilities into China in exchange for promised access to its massive domestic market.

Some US companies, which have been hard over the years, have even struck deals with leading China-state technology to upgrade its missile systems.

"I would say that we are not paying adequate attention to China, because we have been so diverted by the issues of the war on terrorism," John Lawton, former chief of the National Intelligence Council, said in a forum Wednesday.

Chinese officials deny espionage charges. "The allegations of China's threat is totally groundless" said Chu Maoming, spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington.

Spies from about 140 countries sought sensitive US technology last year, according to a report by the Office of the National Counterintelligence Executive.

The most determined efforts came from only a handful of nations, including China, Russia, France, Iran, North Korea and Cuba, counterintelligence officials said.

China is viewed as the most serious threat, they said. It sends foreign technology to maintain robust economic growth that attracts overseas investment and creates jobs for a vast population still beset by poverty and unemployment, analysts said.

As a result, they said, China has adopted a variety unconventional methods including licensing deals, cooperation and espionage—some legal and some illegal.

China has about 3,000 "front" companies in the United States that exist mainly to obtain access to US technology according to government estimates cited by experts.

Some 500,000 Chinese citizens and 11,000 Chinese delegations visit the United States annually, an estimated 150,000 Chinese students are in US universities, many are destined for jobs at high-tech US firms or national research facilities.

The Chinese government assumes such individuals "will be intelligence collectors. And many are," said H.C. Smith, a former US counterintelligence official.

Asian strategy is for people to collect small pieces of unclassified information that can be assembled into a useful intelligence picture, counterintelligence officials said.

Current and former officials expressed doubts about the US ability to deal with China's intelligence efforts, especially as it is embroiled in Iraq and the war on terrorism.

The FBI scaled back its China program sharply after the Cold War ended a decade ago, and still appears to lack resources, despite a subsequent buildup.

"The fact is they have appropriate resources to deal with this, and primarily they've said they're severely understaffed," said Peter Brookes, a former Pentagon official now at the Heritage Foundation.

FBI counterspy has also suffered from lapses including the botched investigation of Wen Ho Lee, the former Los Alamos nuclear laboratory physicist accused of spying for China until the allegations collapsed for lack of evidence. Reuters

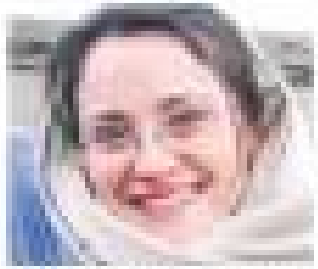
ENJOYING THE WATER BEFORE IT EVAPORATES
A German tourist reads a tourist guide on the floats in the Dead Sea, June 6. Foreign last week, Jordan, Israel and the Palestinians agreed to go ahead with a canal bringing water from the Red Sea to save the Dead Sea, which experts s

Italian kidnapped in Afghanistan released

KABUL—An Italian aid worker kidnapped in Afghanistan has been released and is in good health after 14 days in captivity, government officials from both countries said on Thursday.

Clementina Cantoni, 33, was kidnapped by four gunmen on a Kabul street on May 16. Her abduction mobilized prosecutors in Afghanistan and Italy amid concern during reports about her fate, including rumors that she had been killed.

"I am pleased to announce that this evening we were able to free Clementina Cantoni who was taken hostage 14 days ago by a criminal gang in Kabul," Afghan



CANTONI in undated image

Interior Minister Ali Ahmad Jalali told a news conference.

Cantoni, who works for the Care International aid agency, was in good condition and had been in touch with her family in Italy.

"It's an enormous relief," Italian Foreign Minister Gianfranco Fini told reporters in Luxembourg.

The kidnapping was another blow for the US-backed government of President Hamid Karzai as it struggles to impose authority while battling Taliban insurgents and a wave of crime.

It raised fresh fears of kidnappings by anti-government insurgents or criminals. Cantoni appeared in a videotape on May 24 looking tense and flanked by two men pointing rifles at her.

Cantoni's father, Mino Cantoni, greeted journalists at front of his Milan apartment. "We have talked to Clementina and we found her in the same good humor as always," he said.

"Our first thoughts go to all of those people who still find themselves in the position Clementina was in."

Pope Benedict had joined calls for her release.

Sky Italia television showed pictures of Cantoni, her face and shoulders covered by a blue scarf, walking down some stairs with a minder.

Italian officials said she would spend the night at the embassy in Kabul before flying to Rome on Friday morning. Reuters

Survivors urge probe of Israe

WASHINGTON—Survivors of a US spy ship attacked by Israeli fighters and torpedo boats 40 years ago are pressing the Pentagon for an investigation into alleged Israeli war crimes for a strike that claimed 205 casualties, including 34 killed.

The attack on the USS Liberty occurred in international waters during the Six-Day War in 1967 between Israel, Egypt and other Arab nations. The survivors claim the attack itself was a violation of the Geneva Conventions regulating conduct of war, and that Israeli pilots were warned when Israeli sailors fired at survivors and firefighters on the ship's bullet-riddled deck and into rubber life rafts thereon into the water to pick up survivors.

Gary Weissman, president of the USS Liberty Veterans Association, said the appeal to the Defense Department was nothing more than an appeal for justice for his shipmates. Its mission was a "rather routine ship" the Liberty

"Politicians will not touch this," Weissman said. "All the presidents have still not made this issue [a] really important. All we are trying to do is follow the rule of law."

Their new action, a 35-page [illegible] report demanding a [illegible] new investigation, quotes the [illegible] in alleging that Israel didn't know [illegible]

On the afternoon of June 8, [illegible] days into the Six-Day War, [illegible] began circling the Liberty [illegible] of antennas collected [illegible] international waters between [illegible] Egypt, in the Sinai near the Israeli [illegible] and the Gaza Strip west of Israel. [illegible] 7:725 am Liberty's [illegible] ship suffered its one of the [illegible] Israeli gunboats [illegible] US flag and [illegible] US Navy ensign [illegible]

When the attack began, [illegible] crawling ruins, killing or [illegible] wounding others with grenades [illegible] and bombs. There torpedo [illegible]

l. Meeting on the sidelines of the World Economic th a three-year study of the feasibility of ay will evaporate away over another 50 years. AP

li strike on US ship

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the fray, firing machine guns and cannon. One fired a torpedo, which missed the maneuvering ship. Another boat loosed its torpedo, which struck on the starboard side, forward of the command areas, causing more casualties, and Liberty began to list to the right. Those left among the crew of 294 officers and men kept her afloat.

Israel said its personnel mistook the ship for an Egyptian Navy vessel. US officials said that ship was far smaller than Liberty and had none of the antennas the intelligence-gatherer had.

Previous official US and Israeli investigations have found Israel guilty of nothing more than making a mistake, possibly by misidentifying the US ship. A contentious State Department-sponsored conference of historians and other experts last year failed to reach consensus.

Israel apologized and paid damages of close to US$13 million, some to families of the victims. **AP**

Strained US Army relaxes terms for incoming officers

WASHINGTON—The US Army, facing recruiting woes and a reorganized force, will relax requirements for new officers, welcoming older candidates and allowing more tolerance of past minor crimes, officials said on Thursday.

Trying to stem the loss of current personnel, the Army also has made it more difficult to kick soldiers out of the military for alcohol or drug abuse, being overweight or "unsatisfactory performance," according to a recent memo.

"We are an Army at war and increasing levels of attrition of first-term enlisted soldiers in both the training base and units is a matter of great concern," the memo stated.

These changes come as the Army struggles amid the Iraq war to sign up new soldiers at the same time it restructures its force to add numerous additional combat brigades. The regular Army has missed four straight monthly recruiting goals and is in danger of missing its first annual goal since 1999.

Lt. Col. Bryan Hilferty, an Army spokesperson, said in a statement the Army was seeking 300 currently enlisted soldiers and 300 civilians with college degrees, up to age 42, to enter Officer Candidate School. Its graduates are second lieutenants, the Army's lowest-ranking officer.

The average age for graduates of the 14-week program is 27.

Hilferty said current policy normally requires a waiver for anyone over 30 to enter the school. The oldest person to get such a waiver was 40, Hilferty said.

A May 25 memo also stated commanders "may recommend waiver of civil or military offenses" that otherwise might disqualify an applicant. Hilferty said this was not meant to lower quality standards for officers, adding, "Felonies cannot be waived. Drug offenses and sex offenses are not waived."

"An example may be a conviction for underage drinking that occurred prior to enlistment several years ago," Hilferty said of offenses that might be waived.

Col. Joe Curtin, another Army spokesperson, said as the Army creates more brigades, there is a greater demand for lieutenants as well as the higher-ranking captains and majors.

Curtin downplayed the issue of having junior officers much older than those in the current Army, stating they would possess the virtues of experience and maturity. **Reuters**

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OPINION

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Pimentel's ploy

EDITORIAL

THE SENATOR may be smart, but does he think everyone else is stupid? Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr.'s appeal on Thursday night for both President Macapagal-Arroyo and Vice President Noli de Castro to resign is a transparent attempt to gain for the presidency himself.

We are not again in another serious political crisis, and the last thing we need is for a politician to put his personal interest ahead of the nation's. But that, through his incredible appeal, is precisely what Pimentel has done. If he pretends not to understand what we mean, we will explain.

Thursday was the first day the latest jueteng scandal finally gained some traction in the joint Senate committee hearings. (Let us repeat that: the very first day, because all previous testimony in the hearings or narratives peddled in the press amounted to nothing more than sensational hearsay.) In the end, the dramatic testimony of "hagwansir" Sandra Cam left more questions than answers, but there is no denying the impact she made with her tale of back-account numbers and suspicious rewards.

Instead of letting the public absorb the full impact of Cam's testimony, what did Pimentel do? He jumped the gun, to seize the headline for himself.

And what a headline. The Inquisitor's was as clever as it gets: "Some tells GMA: Resign." But while accurate, we must admit that the headline was not as precise as it could have been, because Pimentel also asked De Castro to resign the vice presidency.

This is the point where Pimentel placed personal ahead of national interest. This is also the point where he parted ways with both political logic and simple common sense.

At this stage in the new national trauma, calling on the President to resign was a precipitate act—but it was one unexpected. As Senate President Franklin Drilon explained, such a call was "expected in a politically charged situation." (And in such a situation, Drilon added, pointedly, "the sufficiency or insufficiency of testimonies is beside the point.")

It was not unexpected because politicians whether in or out of power belong to the same predictable breed. So Pimentel, whom we would have expected to act the statesman, decided to outmaneuver both his more politician-Heroz, his amazing leap of logic. "While there is no direct evidence as yet linking her [the President] to jueteng," he argued in a statement released on Thursday night, "the web of evidence is fast closing in on her."

Wouldn't it have been more prudent for him to wait until the "web of evidence" had in fact closed in on the President? That's exactly what he did to the jueteng hearings of 2000 and to President Joseph Estrada's impeachment trial: he reserved his judgment. But then at that time he was a part of the administration. Perhaps evidence is defined differently when you find yourself in the opposition.

But calling on De Castro to resign? What on earth possessed Pimentel to say that? De Castro is not accused of any involvement in any of the scandals besetting the Arroyo administration; if there is no direct evidence "as yet" linking the President, there isn't even a shred of indirect evidence to link the Vice President.

Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that resignation it, as Pimentel asserts, the only "honorable course of action" left for the President. (It isn't, as Archbishop Oscar Cruz, the man who broke the scandal, himself said the other night.) Wouldn't the right next step for De Castro to assume the presidency?

That's what the Constitution provides for. But this isn't enough for Pimentel. Because "they were both elected under questionable circumstances," he said, both Arroyo and De Castro should resign.

"Questionable circumstances"—let's think about that for a moment. Not even fraudulent, or anomalous, or illegal. Just "questionable" (an open invitation by the opposition, of course).

If both Arroyo and De Castro oblige Pimentel, then they will "clear the way for the holding of new elections." Now who will run in Pimentel's stop election?

Fernando Poe Jr. has passed away. Panfilo Lacson's perfect background continues to conserve other members of the opposition. Edgardo Angara has been silent. And Juan Ponce Enrile is being marginalized. That leaves Pimentel, of course!

Lawyers have the perfect word to describe Pimentel's precipitate appeal: self-serving.

'Moro-moro' in the Senate

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

THE CURRENT Senate investigation of the jueteng scandal is creating a lot of noise—and more—but is it full of the smart and fury signifying nothing. It is like many legislative investigations, which the Constitution requires to be "in aid of legislation," but are sometimes only to advertise the legislators and to satisfy the public cry for blood.

How many bills have been introduced as a result of the many legislative investigations that have been conducted to date? If there were some bills, how many of them have been approved into law? I remember that several years ago, there were legislative investigations conducted almost monthly by the Senate and the House of Representatives on the widespread rumors that the military and some civilian officials shared in the ransom paid for the release of some persons kidnapped by the Abu Sayyaf bandits. What happened to those reports?

Rep. Boni Gotiong Locsin recalled recently that he had seven spent Song Fiesta some years ago in Congress but does not see what happened to that inquiry. Apparently Fiesta was abandoned for he is reportedly now in the United States and is conveniently unavailable for another legislative probe. Only recently, Gotiong claimed another inquiry disclosed Gen. Jasmin Lopez, who was also being investigated by a court martial and also the Ombudsman. Lopez was flustered when Cigui invoked his constitutional right to let silent that she complained constitutional right was violated.

And there was the investigation of Sen. Ibn. Ello Lacson by his own colleagues in 2001 that was finished the same year but has been effectively killed for lack of further action in the Senate. People indignantly believed the hooligan of that case until it was abruptly terminated with the subsequent promise that the final sign of the continuing committees would be reported soon. It never came despite the time, work and public funds that were wasted. Of course, no members blithely have proposed and then approved legislation.

Those legislative investigations dealt with serious matters at least, compared to some trivial subjects that nevertheless attracted the official attention of the legislators. What happened to the probe of the extraordinary processing of tofu, the audible of basketball players, and the misadventures of a stray cat in a Catholic school girls? These hearings were attended by many television operators and dramatic the legislators beat their principal work, which was to legislate and not to investigate.

The current Senate investigation of the jueteng scandal is jointly chaired by Sen. Lito Lapid and Sen. Manny Villar, who are both in public and probably even brilliant in their home careers as actor and businessman, respectively. But they do not know much about remedial law. They are not familiar with the rules of evidence, or much even ordinary lawyers cannot claim expertise. Moreover, even ordinary lawyers learn about the hearsay rule and understand that testimony not based on personal knowledge is generally inadmissible.

Many legislative investigators probably act as do not see the difference between direct and circumstantial evidence, for which they cannot be blamed because even lawyers err in different fields. ("If I cannot carry memorize on my back," said the figurine in the Mountain, "neither can you crack a nut.") They presume too much when they jump to unsupported conjures, especially when the government prosecutors are competently doing their work.

From the media reports, the witnesses generally rely only on what has been told them against the suspected subjects of the jueteng payola. Their information is not directly adduced by them but only derived from others. That is hearsay and should have been rejected outright. A line of them has testified that she personally delivered to the alleged recruits bulging envelopes containing millions of pesos every month. It is, of course, her word against their.

So might be supposed, these accused—including the members of the Vice Family and Governor Singson of Ilocos Sur—have all denied the allegations. As a criminal trial before the proper court, it will be left to the judge to determine in his discretion who between the accusers and the accused should be believed. Whether the charges are true or not, judgment is normally rendered in favor of the accused in line with his constitutional presumption of innocence.

Many of these rules are unknown to or are not applied in legislative investigations. These proceedings are usually held only for the edification of the members of Congress as the star attraction with the lawyers, in this case, as the privileged respondents. The comedia must go on.

Dead meat

GET REAL

Sabine Calleja-Montoya

I HAVE been glued to the television set watching the unfolding drama of "hamongguan" in the jueteng scandal. I have been following with the diligent involvement of the President's son and brother-in-law, what is mind-boggling is the reason that jueteng payola has permeated not only the entire government structure, local and national, but apparently even media as well (what is the Tagalog?).

This is not the first time that the public has been treated to revelations about jueteng. Chavit Singson, four years ago, revealed a list of payees. But while the venue was also the Senate, Singson was confining to the impeachment trial of Joseph Estrada, and his supposed involvement as a beneficiary. The extraction of jueteng were almost tangential, hence too lack of attention to its pervasive reach.

But this time, the main subject of the Senate hearings is jueteng itself. That members of the President's family are implicated is grist for the opposition's mill, but the main focus is due to the ease of jueteng corruption and how to end it.

One way to end it, of course, is to legalize jueteng, because all that corruption and enterprising activities take place because it is illegal. Just as the Prohibition era in the United States gave rise to unprecedented corruption, which disappeared when the law was repealed. The government's rationale for making jueteng illegal is common, since it has given its imprimatur to gambling casinos and lotto, which is also a numbers game, except the minimum bets are beyond the reach of the poor. So it should be demonstrably easy to legalize jueteng.

Unfortunately, this will not happen. One, because the Catholic Church is against its legalization, although it receives contributions from Pagcor and the PCSO, which get their money from legalized gambling operations. And two, because government officials, from the bottom line-taxpayer central member all the way to congressperson, who receive bribes (some local officials are threatened jueteng operators), will be loathe to give up a source of regular income. So they are going to put on an act of piety as they rail against legalizing jueteng—a situation where they get their cake and eat it too, because they get financial gains from the Church, while continuing to collect votes from jueteng.

If the Church thinks that it can stop jueteng permanently by some kind of moral revolution, it is enamored to anti-until kingdom come. Certainly, some areas are "jueteng free," because the local officials are against it. But that will forever be the exception. Why? Because grassly paid government officials look forward to the payoffs from jueteng and will use its anything meaningful to stop it. Likewise, there is no incentive for the poor to stop betting in hopes of a windfall, and it is so easy to place their bets.

In sum, prominent may come and go, but illegal jueteng will stay forever.

And speaking of coming and going prominents, this President is in deep trouble, not because of jueteng (she has not been directly implicated), but because of those recorded conversations. Certainly, before any conclusions can be made, the voices must be identified. Who such a simple thing as getting voices printouts have been done by voice identification experts against both. Step 2 would be to find out—and again, technology is available—what was said in the said thing, the Client 1. It's a documentation it was the President (or first gentleman) who was talking and the other person was Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano, it is to examine the contents of the conversations.

I have heard part of the tapes, and read the transcripts. Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye proposed two versions: the "inadvertent" (A) Mahusabong version (who recorded the "inadvertent"? Mahusabong? (BAHP?), and the "doctored" (B). In fact, the female voice was the same. But the male voice recorded in it (jueteng, wrong) was, erroneously considered one, different from the male voice in B (not), with an accent.

The female voice sounds like Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. I can't place the male voice in it, but the D male voice, I am certain, belongs to Garcillano.

So, which is the tampered version, and which is the real thing? My answer: A is the fake, and B is the real thing. One, because experienced audio technicians, whose judgment I trust, have already come unfortunately to that conclusion. Two, because the majority of the conversations have Garcillano's voice speaking with various people, which plus with the conversation that it was Garcillano's phone that was tapped, so how could any of his conversations be false?

And listen to the transcripts of a conversation on June 4 with someone who sounded like Eddie Ranyes, in which she "apologized" and the "advised" various. Mike says, "Kung pwede ho, la-Lingate sipa si Buddy Bichara." Mike wouldn't say "ho" to a young operative in the campaign staff, he would say that to someone like Garcillano. Moreover, the other person says "Pwedi-pwedi ho," which is vulgarese, di. Pag-usig sa Jose-ee Susano." Since Susano Bichara is never accorded any of the canvassing in Congress, she seems alluded at times by the Comelec witness (canvassing the senatorial elections), which means it must be Garcillano on the other end, somehow in the original or the doctored version.

I hope I am wrong. But if I am right, Garcillano is dead meat. Gloria is going to sink in that muck, and worse of all, she cannot claim that with her.

For the sake of country

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

* * *

Some people, notably those from the business community, are now asking, whether the Senate inquiry into jueteng? What good will it do, other than to offer precious time to ubiquitous mikes and camera-ready politicians, followed by sidebars and commercials? What possible good will it do to the question of what to do with jueteng or even for legalization? Up to date nothing has been recommended by authorities and the inquiry has not even started on the political residence. But nothing much other.

* * *

I have written several times on the political mess of some proposals of PMB four by senate, many of them science, who were cleared of their life savings when two unscrupulous bank officials managed to convince their unsuspecting depositors to read their money in a borrowed or a position-out loan. When this fact-finder and Sally Jayne Santos, the depositors' savings were reclaimed by the PMB. This was the modus operandi in all the cases, and the latest in order. As culminate in a 35-year-old widower named Dr. C. Benjamin, who lost around three Centers in 2000 after he spent all of service. She deposited her entire retirement fund at the PMB bank office. Dec. 6, 1999 she was referred to Senior Bank Manager Teresita Crespo, who convinced her to put her money in a time deposit at the bank for three days. Crespo is killed her transferring everything into registration on all the transactions took place inside the bank. Skeptical initially, go some warnings from her co-called "friends" that "I was those wrapped altogether." The PMB, acting on complaints from various quarters, finally fired the two bank officials, but it has cultivated refused to accept its responsibility in compensating the duped depositors.

* * *

To this date, Aseprilla has not gotten back her money and neither has anyone of the dozenmore who number about two dozen. It is a question of justice. Fortunately, the Senate's Macroeconomic group of Senate Pimentel Presidents, before Saturday took pity on this group and is helping them in their suit against the PMB. It is incredible that this venerable old bank has become so reckless with its reputation.

* * *

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The best 'Batman' film

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

* * *

Will managed to catch one of the last few showings of "Madagascar" this week and am glad we ventured.

To those who've read "The Life of 10," and its author's spirited defense of toys, "Madagascar" is the animated version of that fable. The movie is about a group of animal friends at the Central Park Zoo—a lion, a zebra, a hippo and a giraffe, along with a posse of animated penguins and a sociopathic chimpanzee. The penguins are the only actors "real" in the tale," the bigger world which they had long wondered about but which, it turns out, they are eminently unsuited for.

Relations do tend to remain under the "plight" of animals in zoos, and the penguins' ice chafing at the confinement and boredom of their "prison" when they were born to roam the wilderness, free from encounters or human presence. The lion, on the other hand, is portrayed as a rare specimen for animals the less than life has made, especially swooning and swooning downhill of an exclusive and the reassurances of a regular supply of food. There's even a segment in Madagascar, the island to which the animals suddenly realize they're out of their element, stopped in a world where the inhabitants are either predators or prey, where natural judgments tend to sway (seemingly the first premature ejaculation I've seen in the animated (computer) channel.)

But this is much too serious a reference to such a fun movie. We confess television abused that I'm mistaken case even decades from now, as many of the movies I've been watching with my children seem to relate the tales to "those it, now it?)

The price of hope

YOUNG BLOOD

Paul Gideon D. Lucas

* * *

Then I went to Bilibid, the human wasteland and tomb. We had no more tears for us, we slept in beds made of bamboo. We took no tricks in the pots in front of the house, and our meals consisted of the smattering bits and the vegetables planted around houses. Talk about culture shock!

Four languages are spoken in Germany, Hungary, Finland and Sweden. For a time, I felt out of place, but until I could already understand Germans, and gradually I got used to their way of life.

Every day we would ride the hated bullet, a commuter train that connects us persons, to own more remote places where the Mennonites live. Even after the ride, which is about two hours, I still look forward to the Mennonites. Even after the ride, which is about two hours, I still look forward to the Mennonites, we still had to hike for an hour to reach the villages. We walked through banana plantations, cool fields and muddy footpaths littered with horse-dung.

Drs. Dagang, my classmate's mother, had started elementary programs in the Mennonite villages and are never able to attend because of financial problems. Because of this, I was chosen to be the one to teach in their "school" which was actually just a nipa hut. The small of bamboo that had gone without bathing for many days penetrated the air. Some women were clad in sarongs—headed necklaces and belts—but their clothes were tattered and old.

"Despite how are lucky to have one-two of clothes," the missionary working there told me. I could see value by means the kids didn't even have shoes or undergarments, leaving their genitals exposed. Their bellies bulged, inflated by worms.

They were illiterate, yet they could understand what a circle meant. I played with the kids who were fascinated with my digital camera, not knowing that I commonplace in Manila but magical in this village.

One kid stared at me with great curiosity and when I looked at him I saw such pitiful eyes. "What will become of this kid?" I asked myself. With barely enough money to feed themselves and buy medicine, going to school was out of the question.

I wanted to do something. I asked how much schooling starts in the public school.

"Didn't pass per test," I was told.

And they wouldn't afford even that!

"They don't even have enough money for food!" came the answer.

I resolved to support the kid, even with my own allowance. "But how, "I was advised. "The place is really far off. We can still monitor how the funds are spent."

But I insisted. If I did nothing, I would condemn the child to a miserable life, something that could be averted.

Drs. Dagang came up with a plan and asked for the way I'm name would be, and he was 9 years old.

He approached the missionary and asked him if he could help to help the boy. He agreed, saying that the Mission would every little help that would be given to them.

We went to Pilem's house, and I was treated by what I saw. He was a healthy of eight living in a hut inc. larger than our bathroom. Only his mother, aside her Pin-Inde and her parents that husband was already dead. She herself had no means of livelihood.

Through interpreters and gestures we communicated to each other. I was speaking out of judgement and they were speaking of hope. I will send money to them so that Elden and his siblings can go to school.

Thirty years... less than the cost of three soft drinks... can educate a child. I keep telling myself. Later I can get it used to be less, besides, current goods and wage for the better.

In the meantime, Drs. Dagang and she would send Delia, as well as other villagers, to attend literacy and livelihood programs. And I know how little help I was—offering paid in comparison to what she was doing for them. Still I promised to do whatever I could.

We left the village amid a din in of grateful voices. We had given them hope of a better life, a future future. The missionary later told us that there was nothing that night. But they were aware of joy from a people who have suffered so long and who have been forsaken.

Thirty years is the price of hope. It is a small price to pay for progress. And I hope there will be many others who will dwell it out.

* * *

Paul Gideon D. Lucas, 19, is a medicine freshman at UP-PGH in Manila.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS

If you are sending your contributions by e-mail, please tell Rina at rinajimenez@philippine.com.ph together and your address, and send each contribution as an attached file, not as part of the e-mail message. Please do not send more than one piece at a time. Thank you.

THEY SAID

Self-rearrangement

"I don't believe in managing time. It's managing yourself and your energy. The amount of hours doesn't matter. It's the amount of energy you put in your time. If you love what you do, it's not really work."

—Mikee Cojuangco-Jaworski, on the balance she finds between motherhood and business

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Grace at the Center

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambit C. Harper

* * *

Will is by far the most difficult player I have seen in acting. Maybe because he's not really trained, but together in the right setter and the correct venue does not necessarily mean you can write and get a message across, how do you put this words it is: something without sounding "schematic" and "preaching everybody out?" How do you explain this at the nature of one's being it a core that is the real you that surrounds the Divine?

Many of us were introduced in college to the contemplative life of a monk in the autobiographical play of Thomas Merton, "The Seven Story Mountain," a spiritual journey that traced his path to the abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky. But we want on to write several best selling books on spirituality and the life of a monk. "The Sign" that no matter how much times I tried to read them I would draw a blank.

Having been raised in a Catholic household and educated by Benedictine nuns, I was familiar with Ed's "Interior Castle" and John of the Cross' "The Ascent to Mount Carmel" and "The Dark Night," neither of which will ever reach the best seller list of The New York Times. The image of the dark night of the soul may have had a special attraction for a 17-year-old fascinated with angst, but reading these terms was an entirely different matter. As a matter of fact, even more than the mystical texts I found the mystics closer to home in their writings. It's a good thing God doesn't require us to be born to please Him.

But three decades later, while rewriting a term paper on Gathering Prayer given by Fr. Thomas Green, SJ, during a Holy Week recollection, I felt "Interior Castle" and John of the Cross' "The Ascent to Mount Carmel" and "The Dark Night," neither of which will ever reach the best seller list of The New York Times. The image of the dark night of the soul may have had a special attraction for a 17-year-old fascinated with angst, but reading these terms was an entirely different matter. As a matter of fact, even more than the mystical texts I found the mystics closer to home in their writings. It's a good thing God doesn't require us to be born to please Him.

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first kissing introduced Centering Prayer, a prayer like no other that is meant to prepare you to receive the gift of contemplation, contemplative prayer bringing the prayer of interior silence.

The words of this seminar were planned in the 1970s, "an offshoot of the spirit of renewal that pervaded the Second Vatican Council" in the mid-1960s. "Realizing the urgency of reviving the contemplative tradition of the Church in all its purity and in a language suitable to modern men and women using the Catholic laity especially the youth," Father Basil Pennington, William Meninger and Thomas Keating worked to achieve. Since the contemplative dimension of the Gospel. What they did is to take meditation out of the convent and monasteries and make it as natural as breathing.

Centering Prayer was the stage for contemplation, which is described as "passive quiet prayer in which words or thoughts are minimal." "We do not have to do or say or think anything. "Be still and know that I am God." You merely have to place yourself in God's outward presence and consent to His indwelling, your wordless declaration of openness, your willingness to receive Him as a gift. Simply enough, called the Prayer of Silence or the Prayer of Interior Silence. Quite logically, Father Keating asked how we can hear what God is saying whether we are busy reading our newspaper or writing our resume. This is not to exclude those from our prayer time but merely to put everything in its place. There is a time for everything, as some time during the day, there is a time for silence and surrender. Now you say how difficult the words are to describe a divine gift of love and the gift is empty to be received and the body, an act of letting go.

If you believe that man was made for joy and on, if not, continue your search, because there's a in as a soul longing for its Creator. We are told that the minute we feel longing for God, He has already found you, which is only a consoling thought. If you doubt that man was made to be happy (not necessarily having as seen for the all. Look at the lilies of the field, how grace has clothed them in such more than a town of thorny pits, God did mean for you to be happy in the here and now.

One of our were beggar, coming from Catholic schools, a the underlying message that we were meant to be happy in heaven. In the meantime, we have to suffer. This notion we can't miss me, which is probably the reason I found Centering Prayer immediately attractive. His child dignity and service of the Buddhist belief that the root of our unhappiness is desire, has now kept for centuries as a way of true, yes.)

The other problem is, of course, that meditation is considered the province of saints and martyrs, and yet it is described as an experience of God. Such it is open to all the faithful. Who wouldn't as what the complete? Centering Prayer asks you to deepen that relationship with your Creator. This is to exercise, to very basic and real.

Contemplative Dominic Philippines (CDP) is sponsoring the Centering Prayer recollection with Fr. Thomas Dunning on July 23, 2005 at the PNAC Hotel in corner Pedarog Ave., Pasay South. Contact Cecilia Cruz Centering Prayer (02) 8826 (mobile) and 843-4201. If you think this is all hog-wash, take a leap of faith to the dark universe what do you have to lose?

* * *

Cunanan.o.r.belinda@yahoo.com

Baseless allegations leveled against EPCIB's Go and family

LETTERS

ON BEHALF of Antonio Go, chairman of Equitable PCI Bank, I write to protest the patently false allegations made against him and his family by Mr. Agustin and Consuelo Bunsil III in their column.

1. In his column of June 1, 2005, Agustin cited an alleged letter from three directors to the EPCIB board to castigate the three and Go's chairmanship of the bank. There is no such letter. What does exist is a letter from three directors to members contesting the items cited by Agustin who himself acknowledged the non-existence of the alleged letter in his June 4 column. But in need of apologizing, he proceeded to issue another slanderous diatribe.

2. Agustin and Bunsil are evidently making to influence the forthcoming board deliberations on the impending disposition of shares held by a subsidiary, SBC Investments. We cannot understand why serious journalists are reporting on something still in coma; we thought a journalist's duty is to report the facts.

3. Agustin and Bunsil have lambasted the family of Go for "unbridled" taking the helm of EPCIB, saying it holds only a 15 percent stake in it. Go was elected chair of the bank by the majority of shareholders. In addition, Go's family founded EPCIB and grew the bank into what it is today. It is not unfair that a member of the family should enjoy the trust of shareholders.

4. Agustin and Bunsil suggest that the government should run the bank because, together with the SSS and GSIS, it holds more shares than the Go family. In our view, this is entirely an issue for shareholders to decide. It bears pointing out that the Go family holds the single biggest stake of a private shareholder at 15 percent, the next closest is the family of Benjamin Romualdez, with a stake of 7 percent. The idea that the government should be running a financial institution as big as EPCIB is a question of competence, capability and credibility. For the record, when the seats of Go and three businessmen were vacated in 2003, EPCIB has consistently posted growth in earnings and improvements of operations, and it has not all banks in the appreciation of its price in the stock markets.

5. Agustin and Bunsil were also in the forefront of the campaign to railroad the SSS sale of its EPCIB shares to Banco de Oro. This was one pronouncement because of its shortcomings even in the pre-eminent and SSS members. We find it comical that Bunsil is now singing the tune of "the interests of SSS members" as he has yet again for unseen forces trying to paint control of EPCIB.

The parent infractions and even to the correctness of the presentation of Agustin and Bunsil leave us reluctant because the Inquirer has been for years the champion of fair and balanced journalism in our society. We trust the family of Go expects in fair treatment and an honest presentation of facts and issues from your paper.

—ALVIN DE LOS REYES,
executive assistant to Antonio Go, Equitable PCI Bank, Makati Avenue cor. Ayala Ave. Extension, Makati City

Napocor electricity more costly

THIS is in response to a letter that was sent by Jose Ingles of the National Association of Electricity Consumers for Reforms (Nasecore). (PDI, 6/6/05) We are glad to note that Ingles admits that the latest increase in the electricity rates of the Meralco, et (Power Corp) was cut in half by Napocor.

However, Ingles has yet again resurrected a previous issue that we have already answered in various fora. He insists that Meralco should have bought and should continue to buy all its power supply from Napocor, saying off figures to validate his claim.

But there is one fundamental flaw in Ingles's arguments. He insists on comparing Napocor's generation charges with those of Meralco's (D% while deliberately leaving out the transformation cost. He conveniently fails to mention that Napocor's current artificially brought down by government's P1.68/kWh to May 2005 is completely to a presidential directive. It should come as no surprise then for Napocor-position in 2004 for a close to 1,000 customers (Luzon, of which P1,22,000/h was granted in October 2004, and another 6.12 centavos/kWh this April. In addition, Napocor has been at lowest close to none of 90 centavos/kWh on price period rate, which are collected on a monthly add-on to the basic charge.

In view this issue in due proper manner, Ingles should have used more updated figures. For the month of March 2005 (prior to the second round of Napocor increases), the cost of Napocor power (inclusive of the P1.68/kWh reduction) ranged (also VAT) was P1.6042/kWh. This is about 30 centavos more than the per kWh rates of purchased power from Meralco's major IPPs (Quezon Power P1.40; Ilo. Rio, P4.40; San Lorenzo, P1.39). Even if we remove 30 cts. increase/kWh of the subject charges and non-payments of Napocor's part, the cost of Napocor power will still be higher at P1.4%/kWh. And this does not include pre the 47 centavos increase Napocor requested on Quezon Power last April 26, which easily raised the cost of Napocor electricity to P1.9x/kWh.

Ingles should also know that if the IPPs were run in commercial levels or at minimum Energy Quantity (MEQ), the effective average cost of purchased power from the IPPs would have further gone down on a per kWh basis to P4.9x for Quezon Power, P4.7(5.6)x for Ilo. Rio, and P4.80 for San Lorenzo. Again, the IPP rates are already the combined generation and transmission charges. (Note that the Napocor rates are P1.40/42/kWh, or P1.84/kWh with the 47 centavos increase.)

We hope that by shading their figures, we have clarified whatever misimpressions Ingles may have created against Meralco. Should Ingles invite an Inspection, Ingles does for go to the project votes, which is the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC).

—GLEN ESNALDA, vice president and director, Corporate Communication, Meralco, Pasig City

Graft and corruption keeps elite in power

THE CONCERNED Artists of the Philippines (CAP) heads the editorial "Culture and corruption." (PDI, 5/23/05) It speedily referred to the National Commission for Culture and the Arts-sponsored cultural summit, with the theme, "The Power of Arts and Media Education in Breaking the Cycle of Corruption and Poverty."

Artists and cultural workers should indeed be many about "any campaign against corruption not tied waged by the government which, after all, is the playground of the corrupt."

Much as it is ironic for anybody in government to be preaching about "values" and corruption, it is in line with its globalization policy. The MTPDP (2004-2010 chapter on Anti-Corruption proclaims this, "To improve the country's ability to attract foreign investment means building an effective government [void of graft and corruption." Meaning, the foundation of President Macapagal-Arroyo's anti-corruption drive is "to attract foreign investment."

Clearly, the government would now like the arts and media community to exhort to against corruption as a barrier to foreign investment. Foreign investment is the key to development; ergo, corruption will eradicate poverty. Unfortunately, politics and economics are not simple arithmetic. There are the more convoluted combinations for analysis... the country's neocolonial ties with transnationals, the problem of landlessness and patronage politics.

Contrary to your conclusion that the success of the war on corruption depends on the sincerity of the Arroyo administration, our take is that any anti-corruption drive by the government will not succeed because it is contradictory to the nature of its existence. With the power elite's interests, the political and economic elite gain and maintain their power through corruption.

This does not mean that we are not against corruption. It's just that our anti-corruption advocacy is grounded on the opposite side of the fence. The Filipino masses are the victims of corruption, as corruption skews the political and economic structures as well as our country's human and natural resources to foreign entities.

In a related incident in the conference, CAP artists were manhandled and bodily dragged away from the convention hall by hired security and the Kabalo arnis martial artists, a group floated by the NCCA. At this instance, we would like to remind NCCA officials that martial arts is not included in the seven arts of its choice.

Our fault is that we recommend the replacing of the NCCA to be reborn of alternative artistic methods and cultural views. We should have foreseen the extension of the repressive Arroyo regime in the institution, whose executive director, Cecile Guidote Alvarez, is also the presidential adviser on culture.

—JULE L. PO,
PATRICIA QUIROZ,
Concerned Artists of the Philippines, 28 Scout Rallorán, Barangay South Triangle, Quezon City

Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Gergorio

Nationwide power shutdown planned

BAGUIO CITY—President Macapagal-Arroyo's public treasurer may be mounting but can she also take a unilaterally-mandated blackout?

The Benguet Electric Cooperative (Benecot) is encouraging its consumers to voluntarily shut off their power on June 13, Independence Day, as part of a national protest against the value-added tax (VAT) now imposed on electricity use.

Consumers joining the protests are requested to simultaneously switch off their electricity at 7 p.m. and Veneranda Montes, Benecot general manager.

Most of the country's 119 rural electric cooperatives have signified their support, said Luis Manuel Cortel, secretary general of the Association of Philippine Electric Cooperatives (Apec) parent body group.

"The President should freeze the next VAT period, as an opportunity to become a hero (with) a public consultant because VAT on power will hit the marginalized poor... She should not believe cooperatives will abandon (pass the VAT) onto the consumers, and in the end it is the urban and rural poor who will bear the cost," he said.

Cortel said Ms. Arroyo could no longer hide behind "the lie" that the VAT on power would be only part of the life line rates, or special discounts accorded poor consumers because these rates would be shouldered by other consumers, and not by the government.

"The President should aim excellence that the VAT on power would hurt the economy (she is trying to) rebuild," he added.

The latest studies believe that power rates in the provinces will rise by as much as 12 percent when VAT is applied on July 1, Cortel said.

Republic Act 9337, the amended VAT law, removes the exemptions imposed on many basic goods like fuel and electricity.

But Cortel said it also made the power industry fall under the coverage of other tax regimes like franchise taxes. "These add on taxes will multiply power rates by 13 percent, and not just by the 10 percent VAT due is punitive to consumers," he said.

He said Mitsubishing rates subsidized bulk power sales to producer-cooperatives will also be passed on to consumers, and is the nature of some energy officials.

But the Department of Finance had insisted when it used bill-gas dealers, rules threatened to arrange an artificial shortage because of the July 1 implementation of VAT.

Vincent Cabreros, PDI Northern Luzon bureau chief; and Fenette Oveja, PDI Central Luzon bureau

HELP KIDS
In their best attire, children of PELF members prepare a native dance performance during the relief group's biggest convention held at Camp Dangwasan, Saban Bustos, Maguindanao.

Ex-collectors say political will killed 'jueteng' in Puerto, Palawan

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—Amid the controversy linking several politicians to the huge payoffs from the illegal numbers racket "jueteng," (Gat ang) municipality Narra in Palawan had died jueteng for more than a decade now.

Jueteng was put to stop when local officials vowed to stop jueteng in the city, say attempt to revive the illegal numbers game was unsuccessful.

Lucero said he had resisted 10 jueteng collectors earlier but was overwhelmed.

He got 5 percent from the collection of every collector.

During that time, the deans were done twice a day in different locations to avoid being caught.

"My change jueteng workers from time to time to avoid the authorities. Sometimes, the police run after us. There were those who suffered broken limbs from that," he said.

When jueteng was eradicated in the city, former collectors were given seed money to start small businesses and some were employed at the city hall.

Until now, former jueteng operators are still with the city government and have remained loyal to Hagedorn.

"The mayor's orders were not to revive jueteng," Lucero said.

Lucero, a well-respected man in the community, becomes a three-time city councilor.

He held the position of vice-chairman of the committee on peace and order and other affair of the city government.

He said the only way to eradicate jueteng is political will, which Hagedorn had shown.

HAGEDORN

Another three-time city councilor, Daniel Jusoi, agreed with Lucero.

Jusoi becomes watershed bans himself by ordering ban for a government-sanctioned game of chance-cockfighting. "I like jueteng, **the only difference is it is legal, Jusoi said.**

He gets a commission for every winning bet he collects.

When Jusoi was introduced in the city several years ago, it was met with opposition from the Church, and some civil organizations, more organizations but it still pushed through because it was state-run and the franchise is given by Congress and not by local government units.

"Jueteng could no longer survive here because of the reasons I have. I am sure of that," Jusoi said.

Jusoi said the queue of people hoping for their luck at lotto stations is like in the black-market stores.

Ban legalizing jueteng is not a solution to the problem because of the presence of easy (un-)like and other competing games legally sponsored by the government. *Sophia G. Tesoro, PDI Southern Luzon bureau*

School refuses to admit student for leading rallies vs fee hikes

BAGUIO CITY—A nursing student is not graduating next year after his school refuses to admit him for leading students who had been re-

Christel Mark Tinamis, a student of the Baguio Central University (BCU) and a scholar of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), said he was shocked on Monday after the school registrar and the dean refused to admit him following an order from Dr. Mercedes Fernandez, BCU president.

"The school registrar and dean of the nursing department told me that I could not enroll because the president of the school said so. They said the president's main reason was I was a student rally. I was also told to transfer to another school," he said.

Fernandez did not want to talk to Inquirer when asked to comment.

On April 27, Fernandez asked Magdalena Jaman, director of the Commission of Higher Education Cordillera, to transfer Tinamis to other schools for leading student rallies.

"This is to request your good office that your subscriber, Mr. Christel Mark Tinamis, who led several rallies without permit from officers, be transferred to another school," Fernandez said in a letter.

"You'll request is due to my health conditions. At my age, I am easily affected physically and emotionally, which is detrimental to my efficient management of Baguio Central University. Possible and similar incidents should be avoided," she added.

In his letter on May 23, Tinamis questioned Fernandez's decision, saying it runs a violation of his constitutional right to education.

He also asked CHED officials to support his **scholarship so BCU because he passed all his** subjects in school year 2004-2005.

"Based on my record as a CHED-Cordillera is now wise in his case, making it would be difficult for him to transfer to another school.

"Since 2001, I have been a student of BCU and have never committed any acts detrimental to the school. My involvement in leading student rallies are against certain affiliation programs to its performance of my obligations as governor of the College of Nursing and Senate of the student parliamentary," Tinamis said. *Dindo Collano, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

ANNOUNCEMENT

Joint sale of ownership interest in Philippine National Bank

PNB

The Joint Technical Committee (the "Committee"), duly constituted by the Republic of the Philippines ("ROP"), through the Department of Finance ("DOF"), and the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation ("PDIC"), announces that the ROP, PDIC, and Lucio Tan Group shall jointly sell a 67% ownership interest in Philippine National Bank ("PNB" or the "Bank") (the "Transaction"), in accordance with the provisions of the Joint Sale Agreement dated 1 August 2002 and other related agreements.

INVITATION TO PRE-QUALIFY AND TO BID

Interested parties in good standing with regulatory agencies, committed to, and with sufficient financial capability to further develop and enhance the Bank are invited to submit to ING Bank N.V., the exclusive financial advisor to the Committee, a request to pre-qualify together with the following:

(1) full name of the interested party, address, telephone and telefax number of principal contact;
(2) business overview;
(3) list and nationality of shareholders and their respective shareholdings, in the case of corporate shareholders, the principal shareholders thereof and their respective nationalities;
(4) evidence of financial capacity to pursue the Transaction (e.g. audited financial statements or equivalent);
(5) Duly executed confidentiality agreement (form may be obtained from ING Bank N.V.);
(6) if the interested party is a consortium, all the information and documents enumerated above in respect of each member of the consortium, and the consortium shareholding structure.

All documents must be duly certified/signed by an authorized representative of the interested party. All pre-qualification requirements must be submitted to ING Bank N.V. no later than 5:00 p.m. Manila time on 1 July 2005 at any of the following addresses:

The Philippines
21st Floor, Ayala Tower I
Ayala Avenue
Makati City
Philippines
Attention: Juan Carlos Syquia
Phone: (632) 540 8887

Hong Kong
39th Floor, One International Finance Centre
1 Harbour View Street
Central
Hong Kong
Attention: Gopal T. Menon
Phone: (852) 2513 6636

Interested parties should direct all clarifications to ING Bank N.V. – Corporate Finance during regular office hours at the above-noted details.

Pre-qualified interested parties will be informed shortly thereafter and will be provided with a Bidding Package, which includes the bidding rules and an information memorandum on PNB. The Committee reserves the right to accept or reject any interested party without offering any reason whatsoever.

Only pre-qualified interested parties shall be allowed to further participate in the bidding. Bids shall be submitted to the Bidding and Negotiating Committee at Long Gallery, 3rd Flr. PNB Financial Center, Pres. Diosdado Macapagal Avenue, Pasay City from 8 a.m. to 12 noon on 12 August 2005 or at such date, time and place as may be subsequently announced by the Committee.

The Bidding and Negotiating Committee has the right to accept or reject any bid.

In the event of a failed bid, the Bidding and Negotiating Committee shall negotiate directly with the highest qualified bidder.

The bidding process shall be governed by applicable Philippine laws, rules and regulations.

The Committee and the Bidding and Negotiating Committee do not assume any obligation to compensate or indemnify any party for any expense or loss that may be incurred as a result of participating in the Transaction.

Finally, the Committee and the Bidding and Negotiating Committee reserve the right to terminate the Transaction or modify, supplement or change the rules and conduct of bidding and any other aspects of the Transaction at any time. Interested parties will be notified subsequently of any modification, supplement or change.

JOINT TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

OFWs in Saudi cry for help to return home

[A TRIBUNE], Bangsar—A number of Filipino workers in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, are pleading that they be unanimously repatriated after accusing their supposed hospital employer of locking them like prisoners.

Several of them are fisherfolk from this province who sent Mayor Bruno Bergosa a letter that revealed their ordeal under Ahmad Sulaiman, director of the unnamed hospital.

In their letter dated May 19, the workers said they arrived in the hospital in Riyadh last April 16 but since then, they have not been given their promised jobs.

Instead, they said they were detained and their movements were restricted. "Please help us leave this prison camp," they said. The letter, which Bergosa received on June 6, said there are "hundreds of us here from all over the Philippines" who were recruited early this year by [ERS] International Manpower Corp. to work as janitors, nurses, midwives and physical therapists.

"But we have not been employed," they said, adding that some of them were lured to work as caregivers but were given a very low salary.

"There is no work here. All is not permanent. Nothing was followed in the contract particularly on food and accommodation," they said in their letter.

Bergosa endorsed the letter on June 7 to the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration office in Baguio City which immediately called the attention of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration.

Alida Dario, Cordillera POEA officer-in-charge, said once the workers are repatriated, they can file a case for recruitment violations and claim for damages against the agency.

Dario said the agency is owned by Mario Bruno Bernal, a licensed recruiter. Anthony Ranil, the OWWA officer assigned to handle the case, said he would formally inform the Saudi Arabia embassy in Manila about the workers' complaints.

The workers said in their letter that each of them was given 100 to 150 Saudi riyals but the amount was not enough to buy their meals.

In fact, they said, one of them, a woman recruit from Baguio City showed signs of mental disturbance but the hospital officials were forced to take her elsewhere.

"We do not know where she is now," they said. They said they were not allowed to write or make a telephone call except for the letter addressed to Bergosa which, they said, was secretly mailed.

"We are begging you to make us free from this prison camp. Please take action as soon as possible because we are afraid that something might happen to us," the workers asked Bergosa. "We are just being kept here without jobs and we are hungry," they said. Behnar Gavilan, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BANAWE HARVEST
Mother Agnes, a local OFW, Province, harvests rice in fields in the mountains of Bakakeng. Most youngsters of the province had turned their backs on farming, forcing their elders to continue to till the land.

US Army experts return to Sulu for 'assessment'

JOLO, Sulu—Fifteen US military experts returned to Sulu on Thursday to "finalize details" of their assessment of the needs of residents.

Lt. Col. Joe Linder, chief of the Joint Special Operation Task Force Philippines-Forward, said he hoped the assessment would provide communities in the province with better services and facilities.

"We are here to complete the missing details of our more than 200 pages of assessment report, and we are looking for final approval of the [proposed] projects here," Linder told reporters at the Sulu Provincial Capitol Building here.

The missing details, he said, include the cost estimates for a seven-classroom facility in Panamao town and the upgrading of the water facility of the Sulu Provincial Hospital.

Col. Domingo Tutaan Jr., chief of staff of the military's Joint Task Command, said the owners of the American experts would "hopefully consider some plans for a longer stay [in the province] in order to build and really consummate against terror."

"Once the people enjoy a better living condition, they would surely become hostile to lawless elements and terror groups like the Abu Sayyaf," Tutaan said.

The assessment, which was conducted in May covered at least 46 barangays in conflict-affected areas in Panamao, Talipao and Chinalubtob towns. Anita S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau

ROUNDUP

Foreigner found dead

BALIBAGO, Batasan—A foreigner was found dead in Barangay Maslacan here on Tuesday. Bhogal Harbansing Singh had multiple wounds in the head and body. His mouth was covered with packaging tape and his waist in handcuffs when discovered by residents of Maslacan. Police said they were still checking Singh's nationality. Chief Insp. Ramon Escanlar, police chief here, said they identified Singh, who was about 50 years old, through various ID's he had in his wallet that was found in his pants' pocket. Local Brgy. residents in Maslacan ignored the gunshots they heard on Monday night in the area, thinking those came from firecrackers. Earmale Bagas, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Rebs kill traders

SARAMAN CITY—Moro rebels have killed two traders who were missing in Malaysia. North Sibalan officials said recently, because of suspected Abu Sayyaf operations. The military said yesterday Maj. Gen. Eugenio Zerna Lee, chief of the Army's Eastern Command, said members of Salvador Cagayan and Sergio Ramos were buying livestock when they disappeared. Zerna also said they got information that the rebels' executive were based in Barangay Dandang, also in Malaysia, but efforts to locate them have failed. He said a group led by a commander Samang Bangon was identified as responsible for the killings. Zerna also said they were working with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) for the arrest of the suspects. Charlie C. Salazar, PDI Mindanao Bureau

No fees for pupils

CYLEBRIS, Sultan Kudarat—More than 5,000 elementary pupils from Columbio Central Elementary School in Columbio town, Sultan Kudarat have enrolled this school year without paying a single centavo. Their education was purchased by the Parents-Teachers and Community Association (PTCA) with shouldered by Cagbalete Mines Inc. (CMI) and the local government of Columbio. CMI and the Columbio government agreed to pay the PTCA's P500,000 to cover the fees of pupils in their town. Mayor Edwin Barredo said the amount might be insignificant to some people but to parents helped provide P1,000 for 4 children. Columbio is a gold mine town where CMI operates a copper and gold mine. Agudes C. Tinoh, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Postmaster faces raps

BAGUIO CITY—The accused in a series of complaints against the postmaster of Baguio City for the illegal encashment of PSB benefit checks was Rosebudine Ng-Ong City Postmaster's Division Acting Postmaster Regina Bulatao-Villanueva. Investigator [illegible] agent in charge, filed a complaint for "infidelity in the custody of documents" against Ng-Ong before the Office of the Ombudsman in Baguio City. The complaint was filed by 500 disabled residents of the Bo Mata of Barangay F. Bautista, E. Lopez, Baguio City. Many are indigent PhilHealth members. Most of them are in need of medical treatment. Many went to the PhilHealth office in Baguio to verify his claims. Regina said checks were supposed to have been released to the beneficiaries but his claims had been encashed by somebody else. Carla P. Gomez, PDI Baguio Bureau

INQUIRER Visayas

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Reforestation turns ripe for profits

By Rory G. Amarado
Dumaguete City

SOON, he will be reaping millions of pesos from what he planted—literally—out of a desire to save the forest. And his is a showcase of a successful reforestation project undertaken by a private individual.

Retired Col. Juan Tiempo began planting trees in the late '80s in Barangay Tayasan, Bayawan City, 110 km south of Dumaguete City, when he was a junior officer of the defunct Philippine Constabulary assigned in Negros Oriental.

"In my previous assignments with the (PC), I noticed a lot our forest were forgotten and left unproductive. So I thought of it as a challenge, and since nobody else took the lead, I started planting trees in Tayasan," Tiempo recalled.

"Kanunay man sya sa akong hunahuna. Bisan I wanted a) to help our ecosystem and help the people," he added.

Tiempo was PC-Integrated National Police commander in Negros Oriental in 1991. He left he retired from the service that same year, he had assumed ranks in various capacities in the province, enabling him to establish a base in Tayasan.

Tree holder

Using his retirement pay to bankroll his dreams, Tiempo went full-time into planting trees in public land declared by the government as alienable and disposable and offered to private individuals for reforestation.

In 1994, he obtained an Integrated Forest Management Agreement (IFMA) from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to reforest 454 hectares of denuded forest land in Tayasan. The contract expires after 25 years but is renewable for another 25 years.

By 1998, Tiempo's area expanded to 1,200 ha.

To finance the project, Tiempo borrowed P3.8 million from the Land Bank of the Philippines and employed around 100 workers. At present, he maintains a workforce of 40 people to manicure the area.

According to Charlie Silvo, former provincial reforestation coordinator and now community environment and natural resources officer in Dumaguete, Tiempo's forest plantation can easily command a price of not less than P600 million.

Prospective buyers

The area is planted with mangium and eucalyptus trees, and each tree has an average diameter of 20 centimeters and height ranging from eight to 15 meters.

Silvo said the trees were now ready for harvest. Under the IFma, he said, Tiempo would get all the proceeds of the plantation.

However, Tiempo said he might be waiting for sometime to cash in millions. Prospective buyers who had approached him either offered to buy his trees at a low price or wanted a very small volume, he said.

He disclosed that a prospective Singapore buyer would be meeting him this month.

The government has been encouraging private entities or individuals to engage in reforestation under IFma because it does not have enough funds to support such undertaking, Fabre said. "IFma is a very good program and a great help to the government," he said.

Private sector help

He said the IFma tasks the private sector with helping reforest denuded mountains without a single centavo coming from the government.

In Negros Oriental, there are four IFma holders, the environment official said. Among them is transport magnate Ricardo Tesoro and his wife Olivia, who entered into a contract with the DENR to reforest some 750 ha in Barangay Cabatuanan, Bacong 130 km south of Dumaguete.

The Tesoros, who own Silliman Tours which operates a fleet of buses in the Visayas and Mindanao, began reforestation work in 2005.

Silvo identified the other IFma holders as a certain Lacuesta and Mister Up.

THESE trees in retired Col. Juan Tiempo's plantation in Tayasan, Bayawan are now ready for harvest.

METRO Col. Juan Tiempo and CENRO personnel inside Tiempo's wooden tree plantation in Tayasan, Bayawan.

Opportunity knocks but once.

JOB Market

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10 Senate allies, 2 bishops spurn GMA

(Turn page A1)

administration legislators to "impeach" the credibility of the jueteng witnesses.

So far, the sharpest statements in the three hearings had come from Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago. Senators Ramon Revilla and Richard Gordon also ran after the credibility of the witnesses.

Asked if the President was unhappy with the Senate investigation, the senior senator said: "The President is not mad."

The dinner would have taken place on the same night that jueteng bagman Eufemio Cruz came out on ABS-CBN to claim she delivered jueteng payola to Congressmen Mikey and Iggy Arroyo, the President's son and brother-in-law respectively.

An administration source said the invitation for the Malacañang dinner was extended as early as Monday, the day jueteng bagmen Richard Enrico and Abraham Rita testified in the Senate. Sabog Fire Gumboan Mike, Mikey and Iggy is partying.

A senator said at least 18 senators were set to go until they decided to "backout" at the last minute.

A third senator said the administration senators discussed if it was proper to go to a Palace dinner in the middle of the jueteng investigations.

A fourth senator said that, among those who had reservations, Sen. Mar Roxas gave the opinion that they should not be perceived as being dictated upon by Malacañang.

Roxas' instinct

"Sen Jamie Mar has a very keen sense of political developments," a colleague said, noting that Roxas was among the first members of the Senate Cabinet who quit before Joseph Estrada's downfall.

Roxas confirmed he was invited to dinner but said he could not go because of a previous engagement. But Roxas declined to confirm if he had reservations about going to the dinner.

A senator, however, said Roxas told his colleagues during the dinner that "some promise on individual and institutional credibility."

"Even if we are supportive of Gma, it can only delay will be diminished there are would be inaffected. If it is perceived that we were ordered [by the President], our credibility will be destroyed," he recalled Roxas as saying.

Roxas said the better way was for party members to express unconditional support for the President, like what he and Sen Liberal Party members did when they went to Malacañang a few days ago.

Bishops say 'No'

An opposition senator said he had been asked by a Malacañang emissary to join lunch with the President.

"The proposal was for seven seats," the senator said.

The refusal from the senators came after two Roman Catholic Church prelates spurned Mr Arroyo's appeal to them to cancel today's planned massive protest action against her administration.

Mr Arroyo met with Bishop Deogracias Iñiguez of Caloocan and Antonio Tobias of Novaliches over dinner Tuesday to potentially set her plea, a source privy to the meeting told the Inquirer.

The meeting was purportedly arranged by House Speaker Jose de Venecia who had said that "the next few days [were] difficult moments for our country and people."

A compromise

"The President asked them if they could cancel the rallies/ day of mourning," the source said. "She told the bishops to give her a chance."

But Iñiguez and Tobias, who will lead the multisectoral action, politely turned down her request, the source said.

The bishops, instead, agreed on a "compromise" by not demanding her ouster during the planned prayer rally set at Manila's Luneta Rizal Park at 2 p.m., said the source.

Iñiguez confirmed the meeting with Mr Arroyo but declined to give details.

"Our talk was confidential. It was about a different matter," he said in a text message in Filipino.

He did not reply when asked if Mr Arroyo had indeed asked that today's rally be cancelled.

Tobias did not reply to an Inquirer text message.

On Thursday, two days after the Malacañang dinner, Iñiguez called a press conference and said the then action was not meant to seek the President's ouster.

No 'People Power'

In a statement, he said he and Tobias still recognized Mr Arroyo as "the duly sworn-in constitutional leader of the country."

Iñiguez also said he was not supporting another People Power revolt, saying that would be unconstitutional and would let "terrorists in the government of the country."

Despite the purported compromise, the two bishops were expected to spearhead what would be the biggest anti-Arroyo rally since the May 2004 elections.

The move is expected to gather some of the most vocal critics of Mr Arroyo from the United Opposition (UNO), the Jaime Sin-led People's Movement Against Poverty, and even from warring left-leaning groups, such as Bayan, Mibayan and Bandala.

The other players

The planned protest was organized by the Kilusang Makabansang Ekonomiya. Iñiguez and Tobias, along with Bishop Emerito Julio Xavier Labayen, are senior advisers of the group.

Expected to show up are opposition frontmen Jamby Madrigal, Alfredo Lim, Loius Ejercito and her son Jinggoy, according to ESPI chair Jimmy Bagadiong.

Defeated presidential candidates Sen. Fidel Villanueva and members of his team in Lord Movement have also expressed their intention to join the rally, Bagadiong said.

Sr. and Manuel Aquino Jaime of Makati and Jose Nicon Ejercito of San Juan, and Cabuyao Rep. Luis "Baby" Arroyo had also signified they would come.

Bagadiong said his group would try not to make the rally an "anti-GMA event."

"Of course, we cannot control those who will be speaking on stage," he said. "But we would really want to keep the atmosphere calm. We don't want provocative statements. We want peaceful rally."

He said the rally was meant only to show that on the anniversary of Independence Day there was "more reason to mourn than to celebrate."

"The situation is getting worse," he said.

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INQUIBOX

Question of the Week

What do you think should be done to some top government and police officials accused of receiving huge amounts of jueteng money?

Senders of e-text SI texts as published in Tuesday's InquiBox *will each receive an "Inquirer Mug!"*

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(Maximum of 150 characters)
Inquirer ad rates/specs/mailing address to 2337 or 582 as their prices will be matched to Text.

Wycoco on Ong: 'Plotter with no credibility'

By Marguax Ordiz

is PLOTTER with no credibility.

This was how National Bureau of Investigation Director Reynaldo Wycoco described former Deputy Executive Secretary Ong, who was last assigned to the NBI Deputy Director for Technical Services.

Wycoco added that Ong had been considered for appointment as NBI director.

"He has always been a plotter, wanting to take over as chief of the NBI," Wycoco said.

The NBI director said that when Ong was assigned to the Department of Justice Commission on the Settlement of Land Problems (Cosela), he joined the group of Horacio "Boy" Morales and participated in the prosecutions of "bloated but false" witnesses in Cebu land disputes.

Mr. Morales joined protests against President Macapagal-Arroyo, Wycoco said, adding that Ong had been a supporter of the late Fernando Poe Jr. during the election.

"He has all the reasons to gripe," Wycoco said.

He stressed, "We are not surprised he turns out now because he was so disgruntled at the NBI."

A lawyer, Ong served the bureau for more than 25 years, according to NBI Special Task Force chief Reynaldo Esmeralda. He appointed and was confirmed by Ms Arroyo and lapsed shortly after the 2004 elections.

Esmeralda said Ong began his career as an NBI agent and was assigned to Jolo and Zamboanga where Abuyog is from. He then became chief of the bureau's Research and National Capital Region divisions before he became deputy director for intelligence.

Ong was consolidated to be NBI director, then a church of opinion with Director Wycoco ended that," Esmeralda said.

Lawmakers hit Gonzalez on tape

By Philip C. Tubeza

STOP eavesdropping media.

Lawmakers issued this call yesterday to Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez as they castigated him for threatening media outlets that air or distribute copies of the audio tape that allegedly contains wiretapped conversations of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

House Minority Leader Francis Escudero and Cavite Rep. Gilbert Remulla, chair of the House public information committee, said the press was acting within its rights in receiving and distributing copies of the controversial tape.

"The DOJ [Department of Justice] seems bent on terrorizing the media by an implicit threat of investigations. Sting of charges and arrests. It will be an exercise in futility as copies of the recorded calls have been circulated widely," said Remulla, who as committee will lead the House investigation next week on the audio tape.

"Also, I subscribe to the view that until a party involved claims that his or hers is the voice on the recording, it cannot be deemed as an illegal wiretap," he said.

So far, no one, including the President, had categorically said that they were the victims of the alleged unauthorized wiretapping.

"What I am saying is that it is the duty part of the public domain and there is little that can be done to stop its distribution. Unless, of course, the entire government wants to turn the country into a police state," Remulla said.

Escudero said Gonzalez's threats were designed to "muzzle and silence the truth," adding that his actions also confirmed his bias for the President and her relatives.

A cover-up?

"What are they so afraid of? Why not let the people listen to it and decide for themselves. Why are they so afraid of the truth?" Escudero said.

"Secretary Gonzalez is already clearly lawyering for the President and her relatives and not for the nation and our people. We should just simply 'wait' his decrees and fight on to our merits for our truth," he added.

Escudero said that the media should not be cowed by Gonzalez's threats and should continue airing the tapes.

"Otherwise, we will all be instruments of Gonzalez in this huge cover up," he said.

The House committees on public information, national defense, public order and security, electoral reforms and information technology are set to hold a joint investigation about the alleged wiretapping on June 15.

The usual suspects

Remulla said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, Commission on Elections commissioner Virgilio Garcillano, former Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority chair Felicito Payumo, Edgar Rosales, who is the chief of staff of Sen. Ignacio Arroyo and representatives from the National Bureau of Investigation, the National Telecommunications Commission and the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines would be invited.

"It will be the usual suspects ... We will try not to make this into a circus. I'm coordinating with the other committees on how to proceed with this," Remulla said.

"We want the body invited to get testimony on the tapes in a gathering and if we have the technology at the gallantry in [up the Pres] dent's conversations]," he added.

Escudero denied that the political opposition was behind the anti-tapping and said that it only wanted to "know the truth."

"We are opposed to denial for this such, not destabilization. We stand by free speech, not by mudslinging," he said.

Target is not GMA

Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile (Lakas-CMD) said no one in the opposition had the capability to bug the President's conversations. He said that only the telecom companies, the body, and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) had such a capability.

"[The truth], none of us in the opposition has the capability of employing that kind of sophisticated equipment," Enrile said.

"Bugging the President] requires ten month planning, too much technical sophistication," he added.

Enrile also laughed that the target of the wire-tapping might have been Garcillano and not the President. He noted that the audio tape had caught several other conversations of the man who was believed to be Garcillano.

"The description by members of the Cabinet that the President is the target may not be necessarily correct ... What we in fact looked at this, the target is the common denominator of these conversations ... [it's] not the President but in fact, the Comelec official whose name has already been reported," he said.

'Pirates' have 'GMA tapes' . . .

Front page B1

and an election officer about vote-buying in the 2004 national elections is now on CD.

Copies are in the hands of "pirates" supplying cellphone and audio shops to vendors in Metro Manila.

Vendors based on Commonwealth Avenue, Quezon City, on Thursday admitted they already had hundreds of copies ready for sale. But they had yet to actually sell them, fearing that police would go after them if word got out.

"We're really very careful," one trade vendor told the Inquirer. "The virus it's different. It's already the President involved. We will merely go to jail if we're caught."

Dealers continue to peddle, on the sly, pirated VCDs and DVDs even after a series of raids by the Optical Media Board. They discreetly show buyers a catalogue of newly released titles. Discs are handed over only after payment is made.

Commonwealth Avenue is a known hotspot of fake discs, probably most only to foreign, Greenhills and Scottsmall in Caloocan.

Another retailer in the area said demand was high for the recording of Mr Arroyo's alleged phone conversation with Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano.

"Many of our customers have been looking for a copy," he said. "We just tell them that we already have copies but we're not selling them."

Demand for the Arroyo disc has reached the underground market even if MTV versions and transcriptions are already available on the Internet.

And this spells more trouble for Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez who has been threatening to slap charges on media organizations "found to have caused the spread, the playing and the printing of the contents of a tape" of an alleged wiretapped conversation between Mr Arroyo and an election official about fixing the vote in the 2004 elections.

Gonzalez's warning yesterday did not suppress claims that he first saw Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye who first made the tape available to Malacañang reporters last Sunday.

He said he would first go after INQ7.net, the online edition of the Inquirer, which reportedly made the tape available to Internet readers.

Gonzalez in turn, incoming president of the integrated Bar of the Philippines, yesterday said Gonzalez could not invoke the duty of wiretapping law, noting that the President has previously said that it was her voice on the tape.

He said Gonzalez, an Arroyo appointee to the Commission on Elections, also declared that he was the guy caught speaking allegedly with the President.

Arroyo supporter Rep. Rodolfo Fariñas said he was unsure if it was his voice on the other end of the line, De Dios said.

"By threatening prosecution, Gonzalez is impliedly admitting that the voices on the tapes are those of GMA, Garcillano at thanks, a reader Malacañang is trying hard...till now, according," he told the Inquirer.

'Mother of all tapes' surfaces

Front page B1

tion between Ms Arroyo and Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano. Garcillano has denied his is the voice of the male speaker in the wiretap.

Malacañang and Alan Peguia refer the data week released CDs containing the alleged telephone wiretaps purportedly showing that Ms Arroyo was pressing for a new walkout vote election victory. Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said release of the tapes was part of an opposition plot to destabilize Ms Arroyo's administration.

"This tape is the mother of all tapes circulating since Monday," Ong said, naming a suspect. He said the tape contains the hacked telephone conversation and challenged authorities to make an inventory of body files and they will know that four dozen tapes are missing.

Asked about Ong's statement, Rene Saño, Time Bunye, deputy chief of staff for intelligence, said there are no missing tapes in body. "Wiretapping is not part of our job," he said.

Then Saño as reporters were beginning to throw their questions, Bunye walked out of the room and left on board his car.

"If I won't come out with the truth, I pity this Filipino," Ong said.

SAMUEL ONG

Ong said he was not part of any political affiliation, though he was surrounded by opposition personalities during the press conference at the Mandaluyong Metropolitan Court (MeTC) in Makati City, often used by United opposition to its assemblies and meetings.

Cause of problems

"In GMA, Ong of you, resign now for the good of the country. Because you are the cause of all our problems, the great poverty, the corruption, you are the cause of all these. If you really love the country, resign, because if I come out with the rest of the tapes that I entrusted with security brothers, you may never be able to turn back," said Ong.

"The people know that you are not the President. They know that you are an illegitimate president, so resign for the sake of the country," said Ong.

Anyong his revelation may cost him his life, Ong sought the protection of the Church for his safety.

"Now that I have come out, I am dead meat. They could do everything to me, and worse, they could even kill me," said Ong.

After answering a few questions, Ong was subdued away by opposition politicians in a dark green car. As his car left the gates of Mawasbilos gates, some 200 opposition supporters cheered and chanted a call for Ms Arroyo's resign.

Moments after disappeared, some reports said that Ong had holed up in the San Carlos Seminary on Edsa. General Security personnel were in the seminary along with reporters, but none of the opposition spokespersons were able to confirm Ong's presence there.

One opposition leader said Ong had requested that bishops keep watch over him, but none showed up at the seminary.

ADBOARD STATEMENT ON KBP'S DECISION TO WITHDRAW ITS MEMBERSHIP IN THE ADBOARD

Following the decision of the Kapisanan ng mga Broadkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP) to withdraw its membership to the AdBoard, we wish to state the following:

We respect KBP's right to decide what they believe to be the best course for their members given certain contentious issues that befall the broadcast industry. The larger interest, however, dictates that there is need to generate long-term strength by maintaining wholeness among peers, rather than degenerate into unsubordinated parts drifting towards every which way.

Still, we view with apprehension the consequences of such withdrawal. The withdrawal effectively releases KBP members from the responsibility to adhere to AdBoard guidelines and breaks an important link in the system of self-regulation in the advertising industry. Nevertheless, we believe that AdBoard - with the abiding support and cohesiveness of its remaining members - shall continuously sustain its effectiveness in enforcing self-regulation within the industry.

The withdrawal impedes industry efforts to promote a higher sense of social responsibility among advertising practitioners. It happens at a time when the AdBoard has just launched an advocacy that aims to bring about a resurgence of respect for consumers. The program is envisioned to have far reaching impact in transforming knowledge, attitudes and practices in the industry that would result in promoting Filipino values. We could not afford this drawback when what the industry needs is the momentum to surge forward.

In the meantime, we have to manage with what we have, stay on track with the vision to look after the best interest of the consumer. We are thus keeping the doors open in the hope that after the dust settles, enlightenment shall follow and we could welcome our old comrades back to the fold again.

Finally, the AdBoard leadership feels at this development as a defining moment; it could either lead us to despair or catapult us to hope. Amid the bigger challenge of building a better society, we choose hope and make a firmer resolve among the remaining members all the more to close ranks and intensify efforts to pursue the initiatives we have begun.

RAUL S. ALVAREZ
Chairman

ADBOARD

Pimentel's 'resign' call premature, say GMA allies

Front page A1

tled. If [Ms Arroyo] sees it fit to resign, that is obviously one way that will lead to a peaceful end," Atienza said in a phone interview.

But in all fairness, Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio Bunye had this reply: Allot time.

"Those who want the President to resign may go first if they wish, because the President plans to continue the work she has started," Bunye said in a statement. "[She] has not violated any law and is not charged with any crime."

Bunye also said Ms Arroyo's "detractors" had "no plan for the nation at all."

"Those who want her out want to set back fiscal stability and economic security and to throw the nation's economic engine in reverse. We will not allow these ambitious, noisy and selfish few to destroy what we have already built for this country," he added.

Precipitate call

Pimentel had said that Ms Arroyo should resign because she had lost her credibility and moral ascendancy to govern.

But in an interview with radio station dzRH, Santiago said the call for resignation was "precipitate, unwarranted."

She pointed out that Sandra Cam, a "jueteng" bagwoman who testified at the Senate inquiry the other day, did not accuse the President of receiving jueteng money but only her son and brothers-in-law.

"There is no truth clung on guilt by association," Santiago said. "Let's assume that what [Cam] said about the son and brothers-in-law is true ... [But] it doesn't mean that the President is guilty of bribery as well."

Bunye echoed Santiago's view in a phone interview. "I think she calls for resignation on premature. Maybe 'premature' is not even the right word. These calls are baseless and more of wishful thinking on the part of those who want a regime change.

"There is no legal basis, no verified complaint [against the President], and up until Cam, it was all hearsay."

Protest actions

Bunye said he did not believe in speculation that the Arroyo administration was in a critical stage.

He said he had visited the Farmers Market in Cubao, Quezon City, and the public market in Cainta, Rizal, and found that the people were oblivious to the political controversies.

"The majority of our people are concerned about their livelihood and the prices of commodities. They just want their government to begin to attend to their needs," he said.

But Casilo said there would be "no stopping the protests that will especially snowball in the coming days and weeks."

He said that after the rally led yesterday by the Ellsberg filing, beholded by Filipinos DOWN, there would be other mass actions today and tomorrow, Independence Day.

Marquez said yesterday's farmer-led demonstration—which was forcibly dispersed by police—was the beginning of sustained street protests against the "morally and politically weak and bankrupt" Arroyo administration.

Organizers of the KMP rally said eight protesters were hurt and three were arrested; police said at least four officers were taken to hospital.

Nilsa estimated that 500 people took part in the rally, but journalists at the site said up to 3,000 turned out.

Chinoy support

In the hue and cry, Ms Arroyo can count on the support of the Federation of Filipino Chinese Chambers of Commerce Inc.

"If only we would allow President Arroyo to concentrate on her job of nation building, we could also flourish like China," said Francis Chua, the organization's president, in response to her appeal for support in the face of calls for her resignation.

In a speech Thursday night during the pearl anniversary celebration of RP-China diplomatic ties, the President said: "I ask you farmers and students of the Filipino-Chinese community, help me build our Philippines ... [H]elp me challenge those who would want to foment more disunity in the Philippines."

Chua said politics had long been a distraction in this country. "...one of the reasons, he pointed out, why it had stagnated and China had flourished since the opening of diplomatic relations 28 years ago.

"Every time our economy is on the upswing, all negative issues come out to bring us back to square one. We should turn our attention and energy on nation-building rather than destructive," he said.

TRUNCHEONS and voices fly as anti-riot policemen and militant groups railing for the ouster of President Arroyo clash near Malacañang. AFP PHOTO

Chua said that while businessmen wanted all the issues facing Ms Arroyo resolved soon, these should be addressed in a sober way so as not to distract the country from more important goals.

Devastation

But the Kalikasan PNE said in a statement that apart from the economic benefits, the "devastation" her administration was "a plunderer of [our] natural resources."

The participants of the 2nd National People's Conference on Mining in Antipolo, Rizal, said they would take part in the "national anti-mining rally."

"We are asking you to lament the devastation that the Arroyo administration's mining liberalization policy has created upon the environment and the people," said Cec Quimpo, executive director of the Center for Environmental Concerns.

In its own statement, the MNS-TP said it was joining other religious and sectoral calling for the President's resignation.

"The government has shown abandonment of its responsibility to the education sector. Despite our series of mass actions, the present leadership of President has never shown genuine commitment to save our ailing educational system and grant to our legitimate economic demands," KMUP president Benjamin Valbuena said.

According to Valbuena, the government continues "to pursue policies that have made things dramatically worse in the last four years."

"These include a continuous reduction in per capita spending on education, a brutal salary freeze for teachers and the privatization of debt payments over education and other social services," he said.

Valbuena said they have consolidated with the church's position, the "vast majority" had had enough of Ms Arroyo.

"The [people] have no option but to find ways to change this government as quickly as possible," he said, adding:

"The [ongoing] weeks and months, we are prepared to support any group—whether from the religious sector, reformist elements of the military or militant organizations—for as long as it is committed to carrying out basic reforms in education."—Reports from Juliet Labog-Javellana, Michael Lim Ubac, Cil Cabacungan, Jr., Norman Bordadora, Gracie Rutao, TJ Burgonio, Philip C. Tubeza, AP

True to his word . . .

Front page A1

linking him to gambling payoffs.

Arriving at the Sandiganbayan court at 11:17 a.m., the eldest son of President Macapagal Arroyo went straight to the office of Assistant Provincial Prosecutor Rosevelde Ilocson, where he lodged the complaint.

He asked for P5-million in moral damages—10 times the amount which Cam alleged she handed the lawmaker at the Congress' Iranian mall as payoff for supposedly protecting jueteng operations.

Arroyo also demanded exemplary damages of P500,000 and another P500,000 for attorney's fees and other costs.

Vice Gov. Josefina Cuaisa, sister of 10 Pampanga mayors, other local officials and more than 300 people carrying placards mass support for the 36-year-old congressman.

Six pages of the eight-page complaint contained the transcript of Cam's exclusive interview aired on ABS-CBN's TV Patrol World.

In that interview, Cam claimed giving P500,000 to Arroyo and another P400,000 to his uncle, Negros Occidental Rep. Ignacio Arroyo.

'That woman'

The following day, Cam gave the same testimony at the Senate hearing on the jueteng controversy.

"That woman," was how Arroyo called Cam in the press briefing held after Bacani administered to him the oath for the complaint.

In his complaint, Arroyo said that in the interview, Cam's "declarations and accusations are malicious, injurious and defamatory."

There, he added, were "made on a television program seen and heard nationwide and rebroadcasted nationwide on the radio station dzRM, as well as beamed to various parts of the world through the Filipino Channel..."

Arroyo's lawyer, Grace Mary Hechanova-Lerma, said ABS-CBN was not made a party to the case. When she made the statements, Cam was not covered by the immunity provided by the Senate to state witnesses, Hechanova said.

Explaining the legal action, Arroyo told reporters: "Today I took a bold step in clearing my name because I owe this not only to my family and more importantly I owe that to the people I represent, to the Kapampangans because my name has been besmirched and I could not allow this."

The court, he added, was the proper venue to iron out the issue.

Dig out the truth

He filed the case nine days after Senate Transportation Assistant Secretary Rene Magtanggol, former Mitsubishi Vice Mayor Antonio Naguit and his friend Leo Sotelo had separate complaints of libel and perjury against the first of the jueteng whistle-blowers, Wilfredo Mayo.

If Cam's claims that she handed the amount directly in her vehicle he was attending a House session, Arroyo said that was "highly impossible."

He said security personnel in Congress have videos from approaching lawmakers while they are in session and that visitors are required to register in a logbook, he said.

Logbook as proof

Those security measures, he pointed out, would "point out the truth."

"Where are checked the logbook in the whole month of December, there was no Sandra Cam or any of her aliases [registered] in the logbook," Arroyo said.

Now that he filed the case, he said he would "like to see how my self-ire being a good legislator."

"It's time to end these times and make sure that the economic gains and fiscal reforms we have enacted in Congress are translated into projects for our barangays," he said.

Asked how the President had been taking all these developments, he said his mother "is focused and not affected."

"Our conversation with the President normally issues regarding our constituents, in making lives better for the multitudes," Arroyo said.

To charity

He said he would donate to charitable institutions the P5 million that he expected to get from moral damages claims.

Arroyo said he filed the case in Pampanga, not in Manila or in Rizal, where Cam is from, because "this is where my constituents are."

"Even above my obligation to my family, I feel it is my obligation to clear my name in front of the people of Pampanga," he added.

He said he was "very confident" that the Senate presentation would "clear my name."

Arroyo said he would have loved to appear in the Senate hearing but had second thoughts because of what happened to Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Villafuerte.

"Our friend [Villafuerte] was treated unfairly, with all his good intentions. That's why I think there's parliamentary courtesy to avoid these things," he said.

Repeating his mother's line, Arroyo said the jueteng scandal was not only the downside of Philippine politics but also "part of a grand design to destabilize our government."

Ezek p. cumulingsinquirer.net
Editor Ester G. Cipriano

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Vehicle in Makati shooting recovered

By Tarra Y. Quismundo

INCLUDING closer to their suspect, police released yesterday details of the murder of the gunman who killed a television director and wounded seven others in a shooting rampage in Makati City early Wednesday.

"We got the description from witnesses who were around him when the shooting occurred. They said he was wearing dark glasses when they saw him in the car," said Senior Supt. Jesus Gutierrez, Makati Police Department chief.

The gunman killed television director Lou Santiago, 37, and stole Mercedes car at 4:10 a.m. Wednesday.

Witnesses described the gunman, known only as Oliver, as between 30 to 40 years old, and roughly 5-foot-10. He also reportedly had a distinctive mole on his face.

Yesterday, police took custody of a Honda Civic hatchback Toyota 16-unit pick-up with plate number SJW-289 which was reportedly used by the gunman in his escape.

The reliable was turned over by one Estrella Angeles, of 34 Cambridge Street, Hillsborough Subdivision, Mahong, Muntinlupa City, Angeles is the mother of reputed owner Christo Angeles, who was also killed, according to police.

ALIEN TRADERS AS TARGET

Cops bust BI syndicate

By Luige A. del Puerto

A SYNDICATE that operated within the Bureau of Immigration preying mostly on foreign businessmen has been busted by police operatives.

The Presidential Anti-Crime Emergency Response (Pacer) Group, headed by Chief Supt. Avelino Razon, and Antonio Tabaldo, 39, their subordinates Reinaldeen Cupuno, 34, a driver, and Mario Mojico, 38, a BI safety inspector, and Linda Ong, reportedly the group's interpreter.

The suspects allegedly extorted P800,000 from Taiwanese Chen Rong Yao, 33, and Chen Ute Fen, 50, businessmen based in Caraballeda, Rio, Zambales.

Assistance

Members of the Intelligence sought the assistance of police after the suspects approached them on Sunday on charges that one of them was a "fugitive" from Taiwan.

The suspects agreed to release them for P300,000, police said.

On June 6, their agents caught up with the unsuspecting BI agents and their companions in Intramuros, Manila.

Chen Rong Yao was rescued in the entrapment operation.

Seized during the operation were two cars, several handguns, and BI identification cards which turned out to be fake, according to police.

Two hours later, Chen Ute Fen was released unharmed in a bus terminal in Pasay City, also by BI agents identified as Nestor Rodriguez and Ambrosio Manganaan. The two agents remain at large.

Recovered vehicle

Tuesday's later, three operatives led by Chen Rong Yao's vehicle in Malolos, Bulacan.

The car was taken from the businessman when he was robbed on Sunday.

Razon's Senior Supt. Prudencio Ramos said the evasion order that the arrested BI agents used against the Taiwanese was "spurious."

Mission order

But, the suspects maintained that the mission order was genuine. "One of them was a fugitive from Taiwan, and we acted based on a mission order," BI agent Armando Castrodes told reporters.

Police authorities were awaiting official word from the immigration bureau on the status of the two Taiwanese as press time.

Traffic chokes Manila streets

By Margaux C. Ortiz

STREET DANCERS, activists and ordinary citizens in Manila caused unusually heavy traffic in the city yesterday, Western Police District director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong said.

Bulaong said hundreds of members of the streets' group Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas who held rallies on Mendiola Street and Taft Avenue caused considerable jams in the area.

Others said they gathered to mark Independence Day by staging a dance at about 9 a.m. and ended four hours later.

Hundreds of Iglesia Ni Cristo members also flocked to the Quiapo church, until the celebration of the Supreme Court's 106th anniversary added to the traffic downtown.

Bulaong also said that the closure of a portion of Roxas Boulevard due to the final rehearsal of Independence Day activities at the Quirino Grandstand also contributed to the traffic jams.

The Western Police District has deployed 1,258 policemen to assure the city during the Independence Day activities.

Bulaong said the civil military parade, which had been indefinitely held in the afternoon, would be held after the flag raising ceremony at 8 a.m.

At the Eastern Police District, security would be tightened at the Pasaglahman Shrine in San Juan and the Edsa shrine.

Let's do it the legal and constitutional way

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

THE TIMES call for calm and sobriety.

The citizenry should be calm and thinking because blood eager leads to rash judgment.

Let's do away with the unconstitutional power-grab thing, like Edsa 1 and Edsa 2, in change the present leadership because it will lead to more uprisings later.

Edsa 1 led to Edsa 2; Edsa 2 to the failed Edsa 3. One people power uprising led to the other, which led to more failed coup attempts and military mutinies in between.

We made a mistake replacing our leaders through Edsa 1 and Edsa 2. Let's admit it. Edsa 1 and Edsa 2 fostered the rule of the mob.

The height of anarchy took place during Edsa 1, 2 and 3. The only difference between Edsa 1 and 2, on the one hand, and Edsa 3, on the other, is that the first two were successful anarchies, while the third was a failure.

If we, the citizens, think that our present leadership is bound to the public good, it is up to government, let's do it the legal and constitutional way.

The legal way is through impeachment. Or a snap election, if the time is right. Commission on Elections that will not take sides.

That's the way of democracy that this country's going to embrace.

What's to blame for our state of affairs? The military's lack of discipline.

Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and Lt. Gen. Fidel V. Ramos brandished the dots of military discipline when they led the Edsa 1 revolution.

The military was never the same again after Edsa 1. The military establishment now thinks that it is the fourth branch of government—in addition to the executive, legislative and judiciary.

The military mindset that it is supreme over the civilian population was born during the martial-control martial law years. But Marcos held the military in place.

It was during the Aquino administration that the military became spoiled. Euphoric over the newfound freedom, the Cory Aquino government gave the military establishment power over civilians when the new Constitution gave it the role of "protector of the people."

Then, every Tom, Dick and Harry in the military thinks of staging a coup or mutiny whenever he thinks the government failed in its job.

When we have outgrown the present crisis, let's have a Charter change where the military will just be relegated to the place of protecting the republic from internal and external aggression.

And let's not treat the military establishment like a spoiled brat by giving in to its tantrums!

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And let's not treat the military establishment like a spoiled brat by giving in to its tantrums!

ARCHBISHOP CRUZ, MAY I SAY SOMETHING?

The Senate hearings on the alleged jueteng payola leave me unconvinced for the simple reason that the so-called witnesses presented have only served in on those belonging in the administration.

With all due respect to Archbishop Cruz, I honestly believe that he is very sincere about the advocacy of fighting the jueteng menace. I do not doubt him a bit - not because he is "a man of the cloth" for it is no guarantee that "a man of the cloth" is all perfect and all-knowing.

I would like to rely more on the kind of person wearing the cloth, rather than the cloth itself.

Neither do I know Archbishop Cruz personally nor have I ever met him. All I can say is that I perceive him to be really, truly and honestly committed to end the illegal jueteng which to him has become the root of all evil in our society. I agree with him. However, I would like to go further on a personal note that jueteng, if I may add, was and is one of the causes of poverty in our country for it is indeed a very invasive numbers game, so invasive as to lure many people past no regs-tuberculosis to gamble away the little money they have.

But jueteng is not alone, and cannot be blamed the sole cause of poverty. There are other factors in the impoverishment of millions of our people. Without it, they could gamble more and learn as well to make a living for the betterment of their families in the form of putting food on their tables and in meeting their other basic needs.

Even the members of the so-called middle class have suffered a beating in the pre-owned industry for which the private sector is to blame rather than the government.

To make things worse, the pyramid scam of Bebelyn and other groups like them had crippled so many innocent people who lost their lifetime savings. Again, this was caused by the private sector, not by the government.

Our people do not realize that changes in lifestyle can lead to hardships. Take for example the cellphone craze. Even the not so poor have been further impoverished by it.

It is said that we are now the texting capital of the world. And we can believe that, knowing the Filipino psyche.

We accept that cellphones are a necessity nowadays and no longer a luxury. Communication is vital for a society to be progressive. But the problem lies in the way we abuse it.

Texting has almost become a vice, an addiction worse than cigarette-smoking. Text messages are no longer used to communicate but to gossip, to spread wild rumors, to make love, to quarrel and insult, to vilify, to pass on unnecessary messages. All these cost money and to those who cannot afford it is a big drain on their finances.

Accept it or not, this too has contributed a great deal to our people's hardship. Again, it is not the fault of the government but of the private sector whose companies I cannot blaming. I am simply stating a fact.

All those only since Red the Filipinos are suckers when it comes to vices. They are easy preys. That is why, we must all help in protecting our fellowmen in any way we can through sound advice, concientization and moral suasion. So many are being taken advantage of that they already seem helpless.

Sino po ba ang dapat magmalasakit sa ating kapwa kundi tayo rin. Nobody else will care for us except ourselves.

That's why I know where Archbishop Cruz is coming from.

But, Archbishop, a concert-level or seminary-level individual can be a perfect prey to the more worldly ones whose backgrounds we may say have been rather undesirable all their lives.

Thus, Archbishop, is what I fear for you. You can be swallowed by some people whose backgrounds have been shady and less than upright and who are used to playing the rough and tumble game dressed in sheep's clothing.

I have one request to make from the good Archbishop.

Make your campaign against the jueteng more holistic in nature. To me, it is somewhat unfair for your movement to zero in on those your group perceives to be receiving "payolas" from jueteng now.

Your witnesses-informers attested that they've been involved in jueteng as far back as two decades ago. If that is true as they've professed, then allow them to go back in time. Tell them to inform the Filipino people about everyone who had been involved so far so they can remember. Tell us who were the cronies during the Marcos era, the Cory, Ramos and Estrada administrations on to this administration, to be fair, believable and credible.

For these witnesses-informers to limit the scope of their information to those they say are involved NOW leaves much to be desired. If, indeed, your intention is to clean up our society of menace of jueteng, tell your witnesses-informers to tell us everything from at least the '60s to the present. In so doing, we can get a better picture of how many politicians in this country have been corrupted. Only then can we see the gravity of the jueteng structure. And as a consequence, the Senate can better appreciate the full extent of the jueteng tentacles — in aid of legislation, not summary "execution."

To let those involved in the past get away with it reeks of dishonesty and hypocrisy. That is why, and I will tell you now, many doubt the true objective of your advocacy because it is half-baked. If general confession from your witnesses-informers would have been truly more effective, it would also have been good for their souls.

Your witnesses-informers, Archbishop, are old enough to remember what was happening prior to 2001. How come they never said about who they were dealing with then — if they are truly honest and credible. I dare them for that will prove that they are not taking sides.

Our people know who those people were. They are now enjoying their ill-gotten wealth but are surely getting away with it. It is the incompleteness of the testimonies that leaves us all cold.

We see so many familiar faces who were on the take just some years back, now strutting like royal peacocks. And people ask why? Di ba may mga kasalanan din sila? Bakit walang napasukan?

That is why, many, many others aside from me are asking the same questions. This, too, Archbishop, causes many people to suspect that your group is out to destabilize the present government.

Were ex-taxing magagawa, Archbishop. The proceedings as conducted now make many of us doubt the real motive because many of our questions are left unanswered, such as:

1. Who were on the take prior to 2001?
2. Who were the important figures involved then and how money changed hands?
3. Who among the living and the dead, active in public service then and now, and those retired were ever involved? And where are they now?
4. Were the same witnesses-informers now also the ones delivering the "tapes"? Who were they dealing with in the past regimes?

Archbishop, to be selective about it is unfair, unjustifiable, improper, unsound, unfaithful and hypocritical.

Just those questions that I've propounded, Archbishop, are what we, observers to this television-love being shown to us from the Senate are hoping for to be answered.

Let's have a complete, honest to goodness expose, please. Tell your witnesses-informers to give the people the beginning and the ending and not leave the public hanging in suspense. We, too, know much more than we see and hear. The script is not complete.

The investigation to be better appreciated must be in the likes of the "Ten Commandments," not "Gone with the Wind."

Only in so doing, Archbishop, can we say that you and your group "Bantatlon Laban sa Jueteng" can be fully appreciated for that will remove any semblance of bias – if you can access to this request.

And let me make myself very clear:

I am not trying to defend anyone, Archbishop. Please just accept me the courtesy of disposing a certain amount of intelligence, breeding and propriety – even if only out of charity from your kind heart.

And please, Archbishop, do not be offended. Do not get angry with me. And don't ever even try to answer me back for as a "man of the cloth," you are compelled to turn the other cheek because of your sacred vow of humility – something I am not committed to.

Please try to see the merit of my prayer.

Respectfully yours in Christ,

(Sgd) Manuel "Manoling" Morato

Cebu, Bacolod ready to host SEAG

CEBU and Bacolod City, the two biggest provincial sanites in the country, are more than 50 percent ready to host the 12 events assigned them by the Philippine SEA Games Organizing Committee.

Nic Rabaya, executive assistant to Philippine Sailing "Dori" Steinberg, yesterday assured that all the sailing events in Cebu, Manila and Davao, under the scale of 1 to 10, are 7-8 ready to hold the seven duel-

RIGIEVIGANNN

races set in their areas.

Commissioner Joey Mendiola of the Philippine Sports Commission, for his part, said that Bacolod City is all ready to host the events assigned them by the Philippine SEA Games Organizing Committee.

In boxing, men's football, beach and indoor volleyball and weightlifting.

Meanwhile, who was with Pagdanganan during an online interview of the Cebu women bar Thursday, said during the lineup for Kasugayan would assure that except for minor hitches that are expected to be ironed out next week competitions in dance sports, karatedo, judo, gymnastics and taekwondo will go on smoothly in their respective sites.

"Chairman Pagdanganan talked with Cebu City Mayor Tom Osmeña and officials of the Cebu Organizing Committee and they assured him that those will be no problems from first round during the SEAG," Rabaya said.

He said there were a problem with Hotel Macarthur sailing for P450,000 a day to wage the dance sports competitions but it later decided to waive the fee since the athletes and liaison officials will be staying in the same hotel.

Rabaya said that all the other venues are ready, except for Cebu Coliseum (Sambawanda), which only needs to painting.

Mandaue Coliseum will be the site for basketball, judo and pencak silat, the University of San Carlos gym for arnis indoor and Danao City for the mountain bike event in cycling.

Alfredo, reporting on a similar earlier inspection made by PSC chair Ruth Eustaquio last weekend, announced that the venue for the Sepktakro Sports Complex, one of two sites for men's football, all the called venues are in top conditions.

"Pagbasa sinab Lapu-Lapu expressed interest of years of season but eventually not stay's setting the next two weeks," Mendiola stated. "Inabitos si la Salle (boxing and beach volleyball) are ready anytime as well as the Visa Negros College (indoor volleyball) and the Bacolod Convention Center (weightlifting).

Former PSC commissioner and now Cebu Inc. recommendations commissioner Atabe Cynthia Carreon, who also served as one of the liaisons along with Philippine Olympic Committee secretary general Steve Hontiveros, meanwhile, announced that the national training pool will present a special number on Philippine's participation in the Philippine Independence Day celebration tomorrow at the Cinema.

Cua makes nat'l team, boosts sister's chances

RACE CHAMP: Defending champion Jody Cuaseng of the San Miguel Racing Team on the way to managing Rounds 2 and 4 in the 2005 Petron National Touring Car Championship at the Batangas Racing Circuit recently.

SI HERCILA Cua did her younger sister a favor entering the limited field of the 2005 Petron's National Drive Round Finals yesterday at the Sand Tower Road in Tagaytay City.

Cua, easily the biggest revelation in the tournament hosted by Tagaytay City Mayor Bartolo Tolentino, crowned Petron National Master Steve Salvador to join the 15-driver field with 10.6 points and secure a spot in the national team.

Her 69-meter win in their thrilling encounter pulled Salvador out of the magic line and drew the last cable "#1001 Ride Cua shoots the runoff" Salvador was stuck at 0.5 points.

"This is a double victory because I made the team and my sister got the inside track on one more slot," Sharwin said in Filipino.

The younger Cua improved to 7.8 and secured the fifth spot after beating #8084 Jeanne Tabada in their Cera Kuna duel.

The top five players in On Class (motorcross) automatically qualified for the National Championship of the Philippines (NCEN) will compose the women's national standard-bearer team set to compete in this year's Southeast Asian Games.

Petron International Master Shoots Joy Lantzhan also clinched a spot in the team after outmaneuvering counterpart Lorraine Gonzaga-Thurton Gonzaga in 40 minutes of Queen's Power Opening. Lantzhan, the reigning national women's champion, won to take second with 9.5 points.

Darrene Magno also landed a spot in the national team after bulldog the point with Princess Lorraine Gonzaga and Brenda Mercadera. She pushed her total to 9.0 points, already beyond the reach of the sixth running Salvador with only two rounds to play.

Mendoza remained in good shape of making it to the squad with 8.0 record.

Meanwhile, Midhour Olympiad veteran #6504 Leonard Gomez reluctantly kissed her chances goodbye after bowing to Catherine Pereña 5.8 seconds at Elite. She was 1.5 points off the last spot with 6.5.

Benitez, Cabili eye Asian karting wins

BENITEZ (left) and Cabili before their qualifying time trials yesterday in the 2005 Asian Open Karting Championship.

JAVI Benitez and Tomas Cabili of JeT Racing drove their teams against topnotch foreign competitors this weekend in the kickoff of the 2005 Asian Open Karting Championship at the Carmona Circuit Philippines.

Benitez and Cabili will be gunning for honors in the Cadet 60 and Cadet 90 classes respectively in the UR-Phi-rental auto-limited by the Automobile Association of the Philippines.

The 10-year-old Benitez made waves in the second leg of the Shell Superkarting Series at the Subic Bay Metro East Track where he ruled the Cadet 60 Expert class though he has just recovered from an ankle injury.

Benitez set the fastest time in the fastest laptime of 21.379 seconds on the 600-meter track to grab the pole.

Cabili, on the other hand, made it a 1-2 finish for On JeT Racing Team aces, who are backed by Bingo Bonanza Corporation, Hemay Sp. Jr of Mil corporation and Mills Color of Pacific Textile Systems Corporation and Indo Corporation.

Benitez said he's just raring to go against equally talented Cadet 90 Asians rivals that will include Mitchell Gilbert and Mohammad Haykal Dewa of Malaysia, Andrew Yong of Singapore and Sanoa Sahaimon Noor and Shahrul Bajo Mohammad of Indonesia.

"This will be a different experience since this will be my first international race before a home crowd. Even my dad and I'll hope to do my best to make our country proud," said Javi, son of Hugo Benitez, top honcho Altec Bristol.

Benitez mentor-rider Elson Carpio also composed high hopes for Javi, who has been training hard since last weekend.

"He's really focused and he told me he wants to win this one for the country," said Carpio, a professional racing instructor and personal coach of Javi. "He has matured as far as skills and consistency are concerned. I believe he has a big chance of winning the crown and even garner chances of making it to Japan karting."

JAVI Benitez (left) and Tomas Cabili (right) with their coach Elson Carpio.

Universal Reality Combat returns June 25

MANILA's premier mixed martial arts tournament returns to the Casino Filipino Amphitheater in Parañaque City on June 25 with the staging of the 5th Universal Reality Combat Championship (URCC).

Matches of mixed martial arts disciplines will embrace their fans starting at 8 p.m.

Dubbed "Unleashed Fury," the event is presented by Star Mfg Strong Inc in cooperation with Solar Entertainment, Swisscon Inter and Pony Footwear and will feature three title matches.

URCC will also showcase seven supporting bouts featuring boxing, wushu, jujitsu, kickboxing and others.

The main event will see undefeated URCC champion Rubenel "The Running Crow" Leopoldo (8-0) defending his flyweight division title against Israeli "The Natural" Dagi Dolgorsuren (pictures Philippines). Another main contest

RYTHMIC GYMNAST: Slovakia's Lucia Vrabcova performs with the ball during the 31st European Rythmic Gymnastics Championship, in Moscow.

fight is the encounter between (c) "The Predator" Tru Pineapple Barcelig) and Phil "The Beast" Bryner (Tough Republic) who will be fighting for the heavyweight championship.

URCC 4: Unleashed Fury is sponsored by PBR, Sigmax and Lifeline. Tickets worth P450, P700 and P1,000 are available at the Tiketnet outlets at the Ayanna Gilmores and at the SM Department Store and at the Red Locust. For inquiries and other reservations, call 911 1555.

Olympic Day Run registration opens

REGISTRATION for the Olympic Day Run set at Bonifacio, Bonifacio Boulevard, on June 26 is now open at the POC-Mea Office at Rizal Memorial Sports Complex, Vito Cruz, Manila.

Registration on the 10.0K being held worldwide are coordinated through 5220896 or 3920-5599(1).

The field in the 10.0 is used the 2.0 the run/walk mandatory for the groups vying for honors in the regular contest with Sports for All/Go Active as the theme is limited to 2,500 runners, all to be given commemorative T-shirts.

In the 1.0K, which has a special wheelchair division in partnership with the Philippine Sports Association for the Differently Abled (Philpada) chaired by Mike Barredo, the categories are 11 years old and below, 19-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65 and, 66 and above for the males and 18 and below, 19-25, 26-35, and 36 and over.

The 2.5 for runs-on dogs runners has four categories: 13 National Sports Associations, 12 Sports/Fitness Clubs, 11 Local government agencies, and 41 School. Each audience may field as many teams, composed of between 10-20 members, in it can.

Entry fee for the 10.0, offering cash prizes a P300 and for the 10, P50 for every member.

"There'll be a lot of games, giveaways and prizes to be given away. I'm sure the kids, as well as the whole family, will have a great time," Lenzel said.

The field activities, according to Lenzel, include game with water, dribble dribble obstacle, splash tag, piggy bacon, tug war, water volleyball, musical sprinkler, obstacle course, water superball and water bottle shooting. The other is free to the 600 Kids Pitch in prizes are also in store for other.

Sportswatch

NCR stirs kick off active chess meet

THE DEPED National Youth Active Chess Championships (DENCC) Kick-off its eight regional tournaments on June 16-20 with the staging of the National Capital Region (NCR) leg. Close to 300 chess playing students and out-of-school youths are expected to see action on the 9th level. Activity Center of SM Manila. Registration is still ongoing and will end June 15. Only the first 300 registrants/participants will be accommodated on a first-come first-served basis. Entry fee is P50. For more, contact NCR leg coordinator Elmo Bitong at 0916 10 80288 or (02) 736 8980. Winners and runners-up in the eight tournaments nationwide and are being determined by the DENCC leg coordinators in various schools, chess clubs and non-chess playing government offices. They can also be downloaded at www.chess.ph.gh. For patrons, for players 20 years old and below, there will be a P1,000 cash prize, and for adults, for players "Prepare well and better, learn and take them. Will it will be on top.

Weston Manila tilt stakes Sydney trip

QC's a chance to win a free trip to Sydney via Cathay Pacific by joining the 1st Four Wheeler Manila on June 19. The first-place winner of the 10K run will represent the Philippines in the very prestigious Bridge Run Sydney on Sept. 11. The prize includes airfare, hotel accommodation, meals, and the Manila fee. Eight second-runner-up finisher at The Manila Sydney. The event will start at 6 a.m. on the grounds of The Manila Philippine Plaza. The 10K and 10K run starts from Manila Ocean Park in front of the new Heritage Hotel Boulevard with the 10K run having Ermita-Malate as the turning point and the 10K run extending to the Coastal Road. Cash prizes await the top 10 male and female finishers of 5K and 10K runs. Finishers of the 5K Fantasy Weddings, Snowbirds, Sun Lines or The Manila Sports Club. A Size of The Manila Philippine Plaza. Registration fee is P500. For inquiries, call 84 6 6666 ext. 5387 or 5388.

CPU-AGA to stage 3 golf tournaments

BY DOMILIC ROM with the Conference Championship of Central Philippine University, the CPU Alumni Golfer's Association (CPU-AGA) would stage three golf tournaments this year. The Alumni Homecoming Tournament with friends is scheduled on July 29, 30 and 31, the 4th CPU Alumni International Tournament on Sept. 2, 3 and 4 and their CPU Chancellors' Tournament on Dec. 2, 3 and 4. Some of the tournaments is the Iloilo Golf and Country Club, Sta. Barbara, Iloilo. For information, contact engineer Gregorio Alfonsus, CPU-AGA Secretary of CPU Alumni Affairs Office, CPU Campus, Jaro, Iloilo City. Telefax (033) 3350904.

World Slasher Cup begins June 14

HALF WEEKS OF national and international are slightly slash on Tuesday, June 14 when the second leg of the "MSA World Slasher Cup 6 – Gods Championship Derby," slash of the Araneta Coliseum. The three-day slash had June 14, 15 and 16. Slasher Richard Hatton is the biggest crowd-fighting event in the world, it is one of the most-watched tournaments. Ten Slasher Kings is set for hosting the sports affair with Big Dome owners Jorge "Ramo" Araneta and Leo Gonzalez. The first leg held last January (13 runners) team owner Alabama coaches Joseph Medrano and Leo Gonzalez. Joe Rocky Thunderbird 11 and Mrs. Marco and Marco Mr. Marco Mr. Lee Pitaro Coliseum will also present the "Slasher Cup Mania" on July 17 and 18 with Slasher Kings set at PCSO, SSS Registration fee is P1,000. Heads of the event are Jessie Ramos and Carlos Benedicto Cecilio. "The event will be held from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. night due to the big number of fights," said national manager Alex Cabiso. For inquiries, call 911 0186 and 0916 6911 Loretta Sonya Adlaw.

Makati Coliseum 4-cocker begins

AFTER the successful grand opening derby last Wednesday, another heights contest titled as "Season 4 Cock Derby" kicks off the Makati Coliseum today to host the event, featuring thirteen fights. It will start its Among the participants are Nonoy Tiamson Pitoy, Mike Rio, Sabong Bill, Patrick Estacio, Peter Medina, Tony Lacuna, Eric dela and Sabong Diamond Penny, Emil Dina, Bengie Lee, Eddy Lee, Bill Ferrer Group, William De Pardo, Rafael Vitor Mayor Roberto Mercado, Lito Ordoza, Boy de Peso, and Pepito Dino. A total of 13 contests are scheduled for the "Grand Opening" Derby. Fee for the derby is P3,000 per entry with Lito Ordoza Derby Management. July 19 Mg 1 Mga Bongat 1 Mayor Lim 2 SZ 4 Cock Ads 3. Meanwhile, another 4-cock derby is set on June 26 to be hosted by FSI Group. Those will be informed by the PCC if numbers on June 17. Call 09063 Dino 8966 for more details.

SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy B. Molmisa

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Duncon still the man as Spurs beat Pistons /A28
- Welcast guns for 3-0 vs Montalto /A27
- Tyson tips scales at 233 pounds vs McBride /A28
- Serenisan a shot off /A28

Turbochargers force rubber with Realtors

By Jane Manano

SHELL treated what could have been its farewell game of the season with a sense of urgency and turned back Sta. Lucia Realty, 85-78, last night in the Grass Matador PBA Fiesta Conference at the Araneta Coliseum.

Rich Alvarez circled with 16 points while grabbing nine rebounds and Ronald Tubid pumped in 12 of his 26 markers in a fourth-quarter Shell upheaval that evened Sta. Lucia's double-digit lead three-fourths of the way.

Tubid hosted a three-pointer and had seven points in a 17-0 assault that wiped out an 11-point Shell deficit and lowered the Turbochargers to a 67-62 advantage in just four minutes of play in the final frame.

"We improvised a pressing defense to eliminate Sta. Lucia's advantage in the shaded lane," said Shell coach Leo Austria, whose team's ranked Turbochargers forced a sudden-death encounter against the No. 4 Realtors tomorrow.

"I'm sure they (Realtors) will find ways to adjust to the game. But with only a day to spare before the game, it will not be enough and we're going to take advantage of that," added Austria.

After entering their first six shots from the field, Ryan Fletcher finally ended the Realtors' shooting slump with a three-point play off Bill Wennel following a goal-tending by Tubid midway in the fourth quarter.

But Roger Yap and Chris Calimquin joined the scoring fray, combining for 11 points down the stretch as Shell lived for another day.

Billy Mamaril scorched 14 points and had 11 rebounds while Ajari Williams, who stole the lunch at the height of the Turbochargers' decisive rally, finished with 12 points and pitched 11 boards.

Shell's victory came a day after four of its players almost came to blows in practice.

Adonis Jiu, Mario and Carlo Sharma reportedly engaged Billy Mamaril in a shoving match inside the gym's dressing room after the scuffle when he tried to prevent Sharma from throwing the encounter out of proportion.

Austria said the players shook hands and agreed to forget the incident after the workout.

"The intensity was high in practice because

TURBOCHARGERS A27

Court rules Asi a Filipino; PBA clams up

THE COURT of Appeals has upheld the Filipino citizenship of Yeth "Asi Taulava" Taulava-Pauline Tinatoco in a decision that also prohibits the Department of Justice and the Bureau of Immigration from effecting his deportation through summary proceedings.

The three members of the court's seventh special division dismissed the appeal of the DOJ to reverse a decision of the Manila Regional Trial Court that permanently enjoins the government from deporting Taulava.

The Philippine Basketball Association said/held comment on the court's decision. The league suspended Taulava from playing in the league last year due to the 2003 findings that he falsified his Filipino citizenship.

The appellate court's decision was penned by Associate Justice Hector G. Hofilena and concurred in by Associate Justices Martin Villarama (ponente) and Rosmari D. Carandang.

In their decision, the justices declared that "Taulava's natural-born citizenship was already recognized by the (BI's Bureau of Immigration and Deportation's) Board of Commissioners, which enjoys the presumption of regularity in the performance of their duties."

However, the appellate court said, "any

TAULAVA, A3 cont'

TAULAVA: All clear!

BCH Alfonso of Shell tries to wiggle out of a double team put up by Kenneth Duremdes and Herbert Orendain of Sta. Lucia.

ASIAN OPEN

RP karters take front row for today's heats

DARMSTADT, Germany—Asian karting queen Michelle Bumgarner of MMRT Racing took the first step to her 5th to keep her crown when she topped the time trials yesterday of the 2005 Shell Asian Open Karting Championships at the Gartenstadt Circuit Philippines here.

The 15-year-old Bumgarner, daughter of an American businessman and a Filipina from Tarrlac, clocked 42.761 seconds around the 1.3-km track to claim the pole in today's three qualifying heats of the FIA/CIK event sanctioned by the Automobile Association of the Philippines.

Reigning Master of the first Masters Goldcup of the Cebu Karting Group will be starting beside Bumgarner as he posted the second best time of 42.971.

Top Indonesian star Ryan Indrawan Moeswidi clinched third spot, clocking 44.091 seconds while lady Filipino at Steel Flo and Daniel Mark Bumgarner of MMRI Karting were fourth and fifth with clockings of 43.054 and 43.373, respectively.

However, Goldcup ace have to work harder to achieve his bid for triple double after he only placed third in the Senior Max Junior class qualifying, clocking 43.32.

Hong Kong's Ian Jamison topped the class with a time of 44.620, just a breath of Goldcup's teammate Tom Campos, who timed 44.962.

Last year's Masters division champion Marvel Theen was fourth with 45.119, followed by JP Carlos with 45.214.

Malaysia's Ameerun will take his 3 spot in the grid in the Senior Max Junior with his time of 45.057 seconds. Harry Aguilar of Bench Karters was second after clocking 45.357.

Marlon Stockinger was third in the Senior Junior with 45.416, followed by Ricky Haryanto of Indonesia and Jose Mascolo with times of 45.898 and 46.047, respectively.

Nonie Viola, only 10, will be the country's top lot in the Cadet 60 class with a time of 54.860 seconds. Jeff Bartley's Yvone Cahill (55.045) and last year's champion Emmie Carlo Anderia (55.302) will start second and third, respectively.

But foreign bets dominated the Cadet 85 class in the event sponsored by Filipinas Shell. Dennis Adhana Rosen, Bridgette Grace Kate Hood and Rikkie Kate and supported by Ashley Mobile, Mark Stanza, Eastway Motorcycle Racing, Inventrol and Aztec Insurance.

Andrew Tang of Singapore took the pole with a time of 49.892 while Mitchell Gilbert of Malaysia and Dustin Sobion of Indonesia were second and third, respectively, with times of 49.139 and 49.165.

Sunday's races will be televised live on Channel 23 starting at 10:30 a.m. for the first race and 2:30 p.m. for the second race. Race enthusiasts can log on to www.mypace.

MICHELLE Bumgarner walks back to the paddock after turning in the fastest time (top) yesterday.

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Bautista battles Mexican tonight

By Salvan L. Lagumbay
Correspondent

MANDALAY CITY—Reigning WBO Asia Pacific bantamweight king Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista puts his reputation on the line tonight when he goes up against Mexico's Gilberto Bolanos in the opener of the "El Gran Combate" card at the 6,000-capacity Mandalay Cultural and Sports Complex.

"I came here to win, not to fall down," said the veteran Mexican, who is the first from his country to see action in Cebu.

The unbeaten Bautista upped the stakes at 118.50 lbs, while Bolanos came in at 119 for the ring official weigh-in at the ALA Gym supervised by GOI officer Rolando Oliveros yesterday.

Vitro Sports will cover the fight card air it on Sunday starting at 2 p.m.

Bautista, the 18-year-old from Candijay, Bohol, vowed not to disappoint his legion of fans.

Tonight's card also includes debut fights of three new members of the ALA Boys—Joy Canton, AJ Banal and Rashid Baron.

The card also pits Jhet Sarsaung against Elmer Magoro; Cavan dreamer ewweat Jun Pederson; Robert Allanic against Orlan Billiguin; Japanese boy Fujikami versus Cris Alag; and John Carlos against Silly Bullecer.

Court rules Taulava a Filipino ...

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Welcoat guns for 2-0 vs Montaña

MONTAÑA's Robert Sison

ALTHOUGH the Game 1 playoff winner—going by PBL finals records—usually goes on to win the series, Welcoat coach Caloy Garcia was quick to point out the Brainmasters' ill-fated championship stint in the last conference.

The Brainmasters also took the title in the opener then, but the Montaña Jewels eventually claimed the PBL Open championship.

Thus, Welcoat will endeavor to include in unconscious this time when it battles Montaña in Game 2 of the Dirty Ego Open at 7:30 p.m. today at the Ganaza Auditorium.

"Forget the first game, that's not approach," said Garcia in Welcoat shoots for a 2-0 lead in the best-of-five series. "It will be like a do-or-die every game."

Tipoff at 2 p.m., the league-old home to host players with Montaña's Jon Don Salvador, last conference's Most Valuable Player Welcoat's Anthony Pumbengan, Magnolia's drafted Gamex, Granny Goose's JR Quilinchan and Rachest Goose's Mac Cardenas all vying for the top individual plum.

Welcoat was newly re-signed with last 02-03 division of Montaña in Game 1 last Thursday.

Garcia expects Game 2 to be just as tight as the opener.

"The players were unrelaxed I told them we have to maintain calm," said Garcia after the opening win. "If you relax, you give the other team a chance."

Since 2002, only two teams failed to bag the title after winning Game 1.

The Jewels, though, haven't lost two straight games this conference. And to coach Robert Sison said recently, bouncing back from a loss is what his team does best.

The Montaña stars made their presence felt in Game 1 with Abel Comprido filing a game-high 25 points and Mirlando Bobier-

WELCOAT's Caloy Garcia

ing 23 points and 19 rebounds.

Those of their teammates, however, scored more than six points.

"We wanted to stop their shooters," said Garcia.

In contrast, Welcoat explained its balanced attack in the lab.

Leo Rajarde and Mylo Salgado contributed the Brainmasters' offensive with 14 points apiece. Stepping up for the second game in a row, reserve Jessie Ilo, Mata added 13 and Jay-B Reyes contributed 10.

Welcoat also benefited from a lucky break when Comprido missed on a dunk in the closing seconds.

Washington and Rajarde are apparently back in form after struggling early in the semifinal series. Ilustre, however, continues to export more from Washington, his paltoid 8-for-7 FG this.

"We rebounded well but his offense and defense were not that good," he said.

Ayuman Fr. Reyes

Torre still welcome to join RP team—Go

By Manuel B. Cardillo

IN ANOTHER twist to the bouncing three-on-no, National Chess Federation of the Philippines president Go Teng Kok yesterday declared that the door is not totally closed on GM Eugene Torre playing in the Southeast Asian Games.

The "retired" idea—sending a player to the Philippine team—was censured by the NCFP board and Go told the hotpants the dama body can survive "pero con sakit" Torre for the tournament if Asia's first GM decides to make good his threat to skip the qualifiers.

At the same time, Go denied the resumption of the postponed matches in June 22, along with the remainder of the National Championships, to give way to the Shell Open.

A press statement from Go's office yesterday said the NCFP will permit players originally invited in the tournament but who decide to withdraw without valid reasons.

This exempts Grandmaster Rony Villamayor, who will fly back to Singapore on Monday but not Torre, who declared on Thursday that he will skip the qualifiers because he was being singled out by the "system."

"We are still hoping that Eugene can play," Go said over the phone.

"If it turns out that No. 5 (after the qualifiers) is an unknown player, I will consider Eugene," Go added. "The option is open, and ayo sa Eugene also. But Eugene is one of the best in Southeast Asian."

During the first half session held at the Greenfield Pink Hotel on Monday, Go declared first rule three setting action in the qualifiers one for slightly to be picked for the team in the "option."

The National Championships will resume at the Moro Aquino Stadium with a new venue at nine. Instead, the players will be the first four slots in the SEAG national team.

TORRE: The "option"?

GO: Open 500 slot

The players who stands up fifth will be on duty ground, provided the point earned by him surpasses Marlon Clark Gomez, who wanted all the slots in the pre-quota qualifiers.

Garcia and several others raised a flood while the tournament was being played in Tagaytay last weekend after certain regulations governing the event were not to his liked before the first move was done.

A huge group also protested against the NCFP in connection to Lieutenant GM Ariel Mariano and Federico Mariano three-rounds and the event without explaining their earlier qualifiers.

The Philippines is the defending champion in the SEAG.

RP Seniors golf up; FVR to hit 1st drive

RAMOS President Ruby V. Ramos will hit the ceremonial drive in the 2005 Philippine Senior Amateur Golf championship which tees off Wednesday at the Mount Makiling in Los Baños.

Ramos will also see action in the August Senior E. A chairman announced for players over 75 years old.

The 54-hole Open category is expected to have the best players in the land who are 55 years and over. The other divisions are Category II for those between 60 and 64, Category III (65-69) and Super Senior I (70 to 74).

Entries will be accepted until the end of office hours on Monday.

Gross scores will be used to determine the champion in the Open division, while the four age group categories will use the handicap system of scoring.

The composite Makiyan layout—the Mount Makiyan and Mount Lobo nines, some of the recent 1996 Philippine Open—is in its best shape.

Australian longhitter Adam Le Vesconte won the RP Open with a 12-under 272 total.

The second of three national championships the National Golf Association of the Philippines is organizing this year is presented by ICTSI and San Miguel Corp. and backed by Absolut, Pfizer Group, Philam Bible, Pagcor, PCSO, Philippine Airlines, the DOT and the host city Makiyan.

Entry fee is P2,500 for the Open category and P2,000 for the age groups—which will be played over 36 holes inclusive of one practice round.

For inquiries, call the NGAP office at 5256987 or 5245160.

Alcano heads elite cast in Cebu pool challenge

CEBU CITY—Ronnie Alcano, the new golden boy of Philippine billiards, heads an elite field of world-class players seeing action in the 6th World Nine Ball Challenge slated June 20-23 at the SRO City Trade Mall.

Alcano won last month's Intercontinental 9-Ball Pool's Minds leg against the likes of Efren Reyes, Francisco Bustamante, Taiwan's Yang Chung-shun and Chao Fong-pang and other Asian big guns.

The 6th San Jose Super Balite 9-Ball Challenge, to be aired by Pocketcue Enterprises on IBC 13, is offering the biggest purse for a billiards tournament in the South.

Going up against Alcano are world-ranked players San Vin Cenina, Antonio Lining and former Super Balite champions Jessie Orcollo and Rubilen Amit. The 128th edition of the event is backed by Touch Mobile, also the presenter of the TM 9-Ball Philippine Championship League.

Orcollo, a World Pool Championship organizer conqueror, won the 2003 edition while Cenina, the 2004 Manila 9&10 Open champion, won the inaugural leg.

Asian Open Pool Championship organizer Efren "Bata" Reyes.

ALCANO: New issue

Lining and 1997 Southeast Asian Games gold medalist Nelly Acha is also in.

Last year's winner Rubilen Amit, a 21-12 winner over Cenina, is in the Dubai Arab Emirates and won't be able to defend his title.

"We are going to make it bigger next year," San Jose's Art Galicinao pledged in 2004 after handing Reyes his championship trophy.

And bigger it has become with an elite field and the backing of Pocketcue Enterprises, which is combining the TM 9-Ball Asia Bagong Silvil tournament in eight key cities around Luzon.

San Jose Publishing, the only network of community papers in the country with branches in Cebu, Davao, Cagayan de Oro, Bacolod, Dumaguete, Cagayan de Oro, Pampanga, Pangasinan and Zamboanga, started the tournament in 2001 as a crusade for the late Efren "Bata" Reyes.

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Turbochargers force rubber with Realtors

The most interesting people and personalities leave their mark in the pages of the Sunday Inquirer Magazine

INQUIRER

Duncan still the man as Spurs trim Pistons

SAN ANTONIO—Tim Duncan was the Most Valuable Player in the playoffs a year ago. Then maybe Spurs won the NBA championship in 1999 and 2003 and if Kobe One of this year's finals is any indication, he might just make it a three-for-three sweep.

Duncan had 24 points and pulled down 17 rebounds to lead an inspired second half comeback as the Spurs opened the best-of-seven series with an 89-85 win over the defending NBA champion Detroit Pistons on Thursday.

"We're the key to the whole deal. "He's got to be respected," Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said of Duncan.

"Sunny had 24 points and 17 rebounds and he had blocks and he played some great D [defence] tonight and did some wonderful things tonight, and I just ignore him.

"I've got the same treatment Darrell Armstrong got—you just take it for granted every night." It is easy to perhaps take Duncan for granted with his unassuming manner.

The development of players around him like Manu Ginobili, who scored 20 points had nine rebounds on Thursday, and Tony Parker have also helped the Spurs become almost all-round team.

But Spurs assistant Robert Horry, who has played on five NBA championship teams, believes the more skilful

(DUNCAN (left) and Wallace wrestle for control of the ball during second half action in Game 1 of the Antonio, Texas.

Afleet Alex Belmont Stakes fa

Jackson ponders return to Lakers

SAN ANTONIO, Texas—Former Los Angeles coach Phil Jackson reiterated on Thursday that he is pondering a return to the Lakers just one season after leaving the club when contract talks broke down.

Speaking on the pre-game show for game one of the 2005 National Basketball Association finals between San Antonio and Detroit, Jackson reiterated his claim that the Lakers would even consider bringing him back as soon as following the publication of a tell-all book that was highly critical of Kobe Bryant.

"It is the most unusual situation I have ever seen," he said. "Here's a year ago we [Lakers] underwent a 0-5 second change, and now as he in this situation is unusual. It takes a while just to get used to the thought," Asked why it was taking him so long to decide about a return, Jackson said he wants to make sure he is healthy enough to withstand the pressures of coaching an NBA club.

"That's how I been health-wise this have gone on," he said. "Getting through a battery of tests to make sure that things didn't happen that were similar to other situations here in Los Angeles that happened to Rudy Tomjanovich." Jackson didn't provide details about those tests, but he is reportedly working a deal worth $5 million dollars a season.

AFP

ELMONT, New York—Afleet Alex and Gi ancient on the rubber bands of their trou ning Triple Crown series on Saturday in one 127th edition of the Belmont Stakes, fou horses to the longshot.

Preakness Stakes winner Afleet Alex, the 6-5 top choice, and Kentucky Derby champion Giacomo, a 6-1 pick, look the 1 two of any 11 home field, whose other finishers tend only 10 wins in 34 starts, including just one graded stakes victory.

The showdown could mellow Afleet Alex co-owner of the crop, with a reunion that although barely missed in 11 starts. Alex finished third in one length back of 131-1 shot Giacomo, in the Derby while Giacomo was third in the Preakness.

Afleet Alex's jockey Jeremy Rose was confident he had the best mount. "If we're on his nose or five lengths on the quarter pole, I don't think anyone can outkick [us]," he said.

"This horse has a lot of resilience. He's the most athletic horse I've ever been around," said trainer Tim Ritchey, profile of an aristocratic two-a-day workout regimen he does, who learned his distance overcoming a collision with another horse in the stretch before winning the Preakness going away.

Chamberlain noted, also this will be even the sun an interesting his horse's expression.

Gogel rips Booz Allen record by 1

SUTTON, Maryland—Struggling Matt Gogel fired a course-record eight-under par 63 here Thursday to grab a three-stroke lead in the second-round first round of the PGA Booz Allen Classic.

The 34-year-old American's bogey-free round at Congressional Country Club, the site of three major championships, broke the old course mark of 64 set by Brad Faxon (twice) Jim Gallagher and Bobby Clampett at the event in 1986.

Gogel, whose only PGA tour triumph came in 2002 at Bruce Beach, missed the cut in nine of 13 prior starts on this year. His best finish of 2005 was a share of 35th in February at Scottsdale, Arizona.

"It's kind of my zone," Gogel said. "I really hit such bottom a month and a half ago. I've had the most disappointing year I've ever had, so it has finally turned around, I'm getting some confidence." Replacing Tim Herron, Sweden's Fredrik Jacobson and American Jesse Mertsich shared second on 66 at the five million-dollar event, the final tuneup for next week's US Open in Pinehurst, North Carolina.

A handful more lofted play with 67 golfers still on the course, including South African Retief Goosen, two-under par while one hole to complete. This is the sixth year in a row the event has suffered a cancellation delay.

Tiger Woods and David Toms are the only top-10 players absent but the big names swrapped in some Congressional.

Defy Mark Hough and US star Phil Mickelson fired par. Tim Clergang, US Open champion Geoff Ogilvy and Ernie Els opened with 70.

"I was disappointed with the outcry," Mickelson said. "I thought I could score pretty low. I was driving the ball pretty well. I would like to carry it over to the weekend. If I do, I should be able to make some birdies." Woods course capped the leaderboard but Jacobson extended to another's note.

"Three days," Jacobson said. "Take another look on Sunday." Gogel, who has not qualified for the next two second major championship, began on the first 8 some with five pars, then had three sets of back-to-back birdies at 13 and 16, 18 and nine and three and four.

"I would throw it in the bag when I needed to and play it conservative on some other holes," Gogel said.

AFP

SORENSTAM was right for third straight LPGA title.

Sorenstam a shot off; J

JAMIE DE ISSAC, Maryland—the nine Sorenstam began her bid for a third successive LPGA Championship and the second leg of a possible grand slam with a flawless four-under par 68 on Thursday.

Sweden's world number one finished one shot off the lead and was sadly in the company of others the threat of lightning interrupted play.

Three players finish with 67 in the second major of the season — Brittany Lincicome and rookie Michelle Wie, who was playing with Sorenstam and completed her round with five straight birdies.

Filipina Jennifer Rosales (five n'1) (33-36), four four ahead while Phoenix Dorothy Delasin was further back at 74 (40-34).

American's two previous golfing teenagers also made their mark.

Paula Creamer, the 18-year-old who won an event in New York last month, joined the four ways in to joint fourth on 68, while 13-year-old Michelle Wie, the first amateur in the field, had a 69.

Sorenstam, who has won seven of her last 10 tournaments, was delighted with her start.

"It was a very solid round," the solid expression. "I could have played the par three a little better (she only birdie one of the four) but I was back on track and put pressure on [the rivals] with my putting."

Sorenstam set out from the 10th and her birdies were all from inside 13 feet and came at the long 11th and the par-three 15th, five and boards.

But perhaps the most impressive hole was her three, the 272-yard par four 10th.

She pushed her drive through the rough, pitched her approach to the green 20ft above the pin and drawn, holing from

"It was a key par. "I've been in a great s and it was important to get a good start tournament going." The 35-year-old world number former champion, has Annika for four ye finishing her from on 69 41 putt-old named Sa ing a four over 'woo the LPGA Tour.

"I've been having all season but hole," she said. "But I've ei my caddie [Brad Cole the pars and I mana few today." One of t at the par five 18th

Tyson tips scales at 233 pounds vs McBride

WASHINGTON—Former heavyweight champ Mike Tyson topped the scales at 233 pounds on Thursday for his fight against Trinidad native Ali Bride on Saturday.

Tyson, 38, weighed the same for his last fight, a fourth-round knockout loss to Danny Williams last year in Louisville, Kentucky.

The 6-foot-3 McBride, who has a 32-4-1 record with 27 knockouts, weighed 251 pounds, his highest ever for a fight. The 50-year-old McBride has won his last seven fights.

Tyson, hoping to re-emerge in the title picture after losing two of his last three fights, is six pounds lighter than his previous highest fights weight.

The 5-foot-11 Tyson weighed 200 for his seventh-round knockout of Holyfield in 2001. A native of Brooklyn, New York, Tyson has a 50-5 record with 44 knockouts.

Promoters say they have sold more than 14,000 tickets for the fight at the MCI Center, about 3,000 shy of capacity.

Reuters

KEVIN McBride, 6-foot-6, towers over the 5-foot-11 Mike Tyson during their official weigh in yesterday.

Corrales rejects WBC order for rematch with Castillo

MEXICO CITY—Lightweight champion Diego Corrales has appealed a World Boxing Council order for an immediate rematch with the man he lost to subs-to-win, Jose Luis Castillo of Mexico.

According to a statement released on Thursday by the Mexico City-based WBC, the 118.5-born Corrales (41-2) said the governing body almost never requires immediate rematches, and it should allow him an immediate fight before he has to defend his title against Castillo.

Castillo (32-7-2) stunt knocked down Corrales during a ring and forced the bout on May 7 in Las Vegas. But Corrales prevailed when referee Tony Weeks ended the fight in 2:06 of the 10th round, with Castillo on the ropes and taking unanswered punishment to the head.

Castillo appealed to the WBC and to its immediate rematch, claiming Weeks unnecessarily took too long to issue the count before the knockdown. The council ruled the two should fight again as soon as possible, prompting Corrales' appeal.

AP

BRITAIN's Andrew Murray falls and injures his leg during his third round match against Sweden's Thomas Johansson at the Stella Artois Championships at Queen's Club, London.

Federer cruises into quarters

HALLE, Germany—Swiss world number one and top seed Roger Federer breezed into the second round of the 600,000-euro ATP grasscourt event here on Thursday.

Federer, who has won the two previous editions of this event, scored an easy 6-2, 6-4 win over German Florian Mayer in just 58 minutes.

Federer will meet Philipp Kohlschreiber, also from Germany in the quarter-finals.

Federer is commanding from is the first set, suffered some jitters to rise around, never losing games on his service.

"Despite those breaks, I felt an increasing confidence. I'm very happy with my form," said Federer, who gained a 9th title, whose he won in 2003 and 2004.

Kohlschreiber boards said Guillaume Canas beat Serb qualifier Nenad Zimonjic in straight sets 6-3, 7-6 (7/3).

Jean Cache Ferrero of Spain overcame Germany's doubles specialist Alexander Waske, who had knocked out doing out Rafael Nadal in the first round, 7-6 (7/4), 6-7 (7/9), 6-3.

"2005 was really difficult for me. I was not fit neither there but I was out for three months and then I broke my ribs and I lose points," said Ferrero. "I had to come back into competition and shoulders I play more."

It wasn't all bad news for home fans, though, with veteran Rainer Schuttler going down 6-3, 6-3 against Dirk Nowman of Belgium. Another German in the quarters.

AP

2005 NBA Finals in San

Ginobili showcases skills

SAN ANTONIO, Texas—Manu Ginobili is making a name for himself, and what better venue to showcase his skills than in the Mecca of Basketball Association finals.

The 27-year-old sophomore was outstanding in the regular season averaging 16.8 points a game, but he has been relegated support for the San Antonio Spurs in the playoffs, averaging six more points a game.

"My confidence has been built up a lot," said Ginobili after scoring 26 points in San Antonio's 84-69 rout Thursday over Detroit in the opening game of the title series.

"I have more responsibility at the end of the game and that's what I love doing." He rounded off six straight points late in the game to halt a 10-0 Pistons run that had rallied the defending league champions back from a 15-point deficit.

Ginobili, who was chosen for the NBA All-star team for the first time this season, is making his second NBA title in just his third season in league. He won a rookie on the Spurs cruise past New Jersey in the finals in 2003.

A self-described "teacher", Ginobili is one of the best in the league smacking the basket.

"He plays as close game all the time," Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said.

After scoring just four points in the first half on Thursday Ginobili finished from for 11 points in the final quarter.

"We started relaxing," said teammate Robert Horry. "Before he would try to get us the ball but he wasn't able to because those guys are great shot blockers and they got their hands on a lot of balls."

Horry's success is he one of his favourite assists to pick on as Ginobili shot 42 per cent from the three points line to earn respectable season games this season against Detroit.

But Thursday's performance was even more spectacular as the countdown on the broadcaster's clock ticked to zero.

"Manu's unbelievable," said the Spurs' Nazr Mohammed. "I was just sitting over there with my popcorn watching." Unfortunately for Detroit, they did a lot of that too.

AFP

GINOBILI celebrates Chris Bosh (

Armstrong sends warning to Tour de France rivals

LE MONT VENTOUX, France—Lance Armstrong sent here here boots to two major rivals in the Dauphine Libere but he insisted his rivals on Thursday he would be ready to come to win his seventh Tour de France in succession next month.

The American finished third in an 8km uphill time trial of the season new 46.2 km on Mt Ventoux and fourth the next day in his last ride up the West Nimes, 242km's most gruelling mountain and a stalwart he will never conquer.

But the Texan, second overall behind compatriot Levi Leipheimer, said he was not worried in the least.

"Two other are riders do well in the Dauphine Libere and a month later they are not so strong," he said, in a reference to Basque Iban Mayo, who dominated in the Pyrenees last year and sank in the final.

Mayo on Thursday's 182-km fourth stage to the Gruissan verse to Gaudi Alexandre G, teammate while Colombian Santiago Botero was Wednesday's stage trial.

"I have bonds not to be impatient. It was difficult today but the real test is a month away and I stay on schedule.

"I'm trying to gain some condition here, some race rhythm and to focus on the big objective. Everybody is calm and collected and we are ready," he said.

Armstrong addressed he had suffered on the Ventoux climb, but he always has.

"Lance knows that the Ventoux is not his thing, he has had a lot of hard times here in the past.

Reuters

-Ro fires 71

...settled one home from 30-feet.

Collins, a 22-year-old in her fourth season on Tour, has yet to win, but has shown some fine form this season, including a tie for second at the LPGA Tournament in Williamsburg last month.

Oliver Gilfred the Asian Amateur champion of women's golf, the glamorous youngster is based in Las Vegas where she works with Tiger Woods's former coach Butch Harmon.

Sinz had seven birdies and 3rd eagles until she bogeyed the short 17th, while Creamer, with four birdies in a row from the 14th, and five, with birdies in the 10th, 11th and 16th in a fashion look into, both finish into 71st.

Wie's only problem was indigestion . and she was delighted when her round was interrupted by a 52-minute rewatch delay.

Reuters

chumacher wants atrick in F1 race

...TTEL— World champion Michael Schumacher said Thursday that Indianapolis 500 success convy Damon ck should be given a chance to prove her talent in ula One.

...American Patrick has been thrust into the limelight af... finishing fourth in the classic United States body Car ...race weeks ago, the highest a woman has finished in ...ory.

...d Schumacher said: "I would love to have her here to ...with us. I don't know (if she could compete), there ...been guys who have been able to do six and others ...have not, but it would be interesting to find out." The ...situation of a female driver would be a big interest to ...auto fray, which is trying to draw back fans after ...a popularity drop due to recent years of Schumacher ...Ferrari domination.

...rick, 22, finished second behind Anthony Davidson, ...is now the test and reserve driver for BAR-Honda, in ...Formula Four Festival in 2000 and then moved to ...drive after finishing last on a win with the Nemesis ...

...Before season frame Sebrina her impression to ...months have been honestly the way they can racing ...and believes the female races will never make it into ...ula One.

AFP

stros trample Mets or 2nd road victory

...ONTO)— Morgan Ensberg had an 11th inning RBI ...and into double-and Adam Everett smacked a two-run ...lifting the Houston Astros to a 8-3 victory over the ...York Mets on Thursday in National League play at ...Stadium.

...Bottomley, Brad Ausmus and Craig Biggio each ...followed an RBI to the closer's for the surging Astros, ...have three of their last four and two straight road ...

...Spilborgh (1-2) scored a scoreless 13th to pick up ...win while Brad Lidge got the final three outs in the ...to nail down the decision and his 15th save.

...Seth Bell (0-2) was tagged with the loss, hamstrung ...have been on four hits in the 11th and cleared from ...game after giving just one run.

...Wright had a solo homerun for the Mets ...

BUSINESS

Edita Rual D. Mercado
Assistant Editor Corrie S. Navarro

Petron Ultron
The Ultimate Release from Engine Stress. From Petron.

Gov't sees sale of PNB by September

Floor price set at ₱43/share

WHAT'S INSIDE

Flying V, Seaoil raise oil prices by 50¢/liter /B5

US call center putting up regional hub in RP /B4

BREAKTIME
Let's drink to dust /B2

PAL eyes more flights to Japan /B2

Stock quotations /B3

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE GOVERNMENT has set a floor price for the majority ownership of Philippine National Bank at ₱43 a share, indicating the Arroyo administration's resolve to sell the bank this year.

The board of directors of Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. (PDIC) and the Privatization Council approved the floor price following a recommendation by DBC Bank BV, the government's financial adviser for the planned sale of PNB.

Prequalified interested parties will be given a chance to conduct a due-diligence audit on PNB preparatory to the submission of their bids. Public bidding for the 19.08 shares has been tentatively set on Aug. 12.

"I'm looking forward to the successful sale of the bank, which is part of the government's privatization strategy to improve and hasten our fiscal consolidation," Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima said in a statement.

What the government intends to sell is the controlling 67 percent stake in PNB that is jointly owned with the Lucio Tan group. The 67 percent is part of the 90 percent that the two parties hold in PNB. The remaining 1.0 percent of PNB is publicly listed.

The technical committee on the joint sale, composed of PDIC and representatives from the Department of Finance, has waived the right of first offer to the Lucio Tan group, now that the floor price has been set. PDIC said the government's shareholders' agreement with the Lucio Tan group provided an option for the latter to bid for the government's shares.

Should the Lucio Tan group exercise its right of first offer, it will be given the opportunity to improve its bid in the event that rival bidders offer a higher price.

(CONTINUED ON B2)

Exports jumped 8.8% in April

MERCHANDISE exports grew by 8.8 percent year-on-year to $5.15 billion in April, rebounding from a 4.6% decline in March and keeping the government hopeful that the 10-percent growth target for the full year can be reached.

The National Statistics Office (NSO) yesterday reported that the export growth in April was largely attributed to the 6.3-percent expansion in shipments of electronics. The country's biggest export earner accounting for 64.6 percent of the total exports for the month, electronics exports amounted to $3.29 billion.

But the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda), lead agency of the MEG and Chief under the recovery of exports in April was a welcome development, it remained to be seen whether the growth could be sustained in the coming months.

The export growth in April followed the 4.6-percent drop in March and the 8.6-percent decline in February.

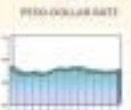
"We are happy with the April figure, but we still don't know whether the growth would continue, or if it was merely a temporary deviation from the downward trend," said Zenaida Monsod, director of the Neda's policy and planning staff. For the moment, the Neda was keeping the 10-percent full-year growth target for exports, he added.

The government economist said

(CONTINUED ON B2)

Currencies

PESO-DOLLAR RATE



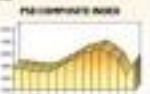
₱53.209 = $1
As of 5 p.m., June 10, 2005

₱107.44 = €1
As of 5 p.m., June 10, 2005

GOLD: $423.50-424.00
per ounce, Hong Kong, June 10, 2005

Stock Market

Shares close 2.05% higher on technical rebound



PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

SHARE prices closed 2.05 percent higher yesterday on a bullish technical rebound after three days of share falls but concerns over rumors of a coup attempt against President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo dampened optimism.

Positive report (B2/B3)

(See main market report on Page B3)

April, announced shortly before the open, provided investors with a reason to be upbeat about the economy despite the political tensions, they said.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index rose 38.04 points to 1,820.18 after trading between 1,808.19 and 1,844.84. Turnover was 739 million shares worth ₱1,771.3 billion.

The broader all-shares index rose 16.6 points to 1,102.86.

Gainers beat losers 66 to 53, with 27 stocks unchanged.

(CONTINUED ON B2)

Ayala's electronics firm buys Speedy-Tech for P6B

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

ELECTRONICS firm Integrated Microelectronics Inc. (IMI), a 73.7 percent owned unit of Ayala Corp., yesterday said it had signed a deal to buy Singapore-based Speedy Tech Electronics.

IMI plans to acquire all of Speedy Tech's 375.2 million outstanding shares for $$105 million or roughly P6 billion, Ayala Corp. managing director Rufino Luis T. Hernandez said in a phone interview.

IMI has P1.5 billion in cash and is poised to tap into its existing credit facilities for the planned acquisition, Hernandez said.

Under the plan, all the issued Speedy Tech shares will be transferred to IMI.

IMI will offer Speedy Tech shareholders a cash consideration of $$0.316 for each of their Speedy Tech shares or 1.32-new IMI shares for every one Speedy Tech share, or a combination of the two.

After securing the necessary shareholder and regulatory approvals, Speedy Tech will become a wholly-owned subsidiary of IMI and will be delisted from the Singapore Stock Exchange.

The acquisition will allow IMI to increase its China market and incumbent industry segments, such as medical, automotive and industrial equipment.

IMI's customers are largely Japanese, while Speedy Tech services clients from the United States, Europe and China.

"We are pleased with this development as this is consistent with our objective to position IMI as one of the leading EMS providers in Asia by establishing a global manufacturing footprint. The merger presents significant opportunities that will be value enhancing to all shareholders," Ayala presidents and IMI chairman Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala said in a disclosure to the stock exchanges.

Speedy Tech manufactures printed circuit board assembly and box build services.

It is also an original design manufacturer of power electronics solutions used in telecommunications and consumer electronics devices.

It is listed on the Singapore Stock Exchange with a market capitalization of $$188.1 million as of June 9.

PAL eyes more flights to Japan

By Clarissa S. Batino

TOKYO, Japan—Philippine Airlines is planning to increase its flights to Japan and South Korea in anticipation of a growth in tourist arrivals from these two countries, a senior airline official said.

Gerardo Velasquez, PAL country manager for Japan and South Korea, urged the Philippine government to negotiate for additional allocations from the two countries to help improve traffic and boost tourism.

PAL currently flies 21 times a week to five points in Japan, and 17 times a week to its hubs and Seoul, in Korea, according to Velasquez.

The flag carrier might increase flights to Nagoya, Japan's fourth largest city, if current allocations given to other airlines won't be used, he said.

"We are studying the matter. If growth would continue, we would have to ask minister-to-minister or negotiate for additional traffic rights in Japan and Korea," said Velasquez.

The PAL executive hoped that the tourism department's campaign to promote Philippines to Japanese travelers would continue to bear fruit.

As it is, flights have been good, particularly from Tokyo, are almost always full, according to Filipinos here.

Last year, the Japanese government gave the Philippines 14 additional rights to Japan. The flight allocation included Nagoya, which previously was not eligible to load customers.

Japan is an important destination to local airlines because it is the second largest source of foreign arrivals, next to the United States.

Shares close 2.05% ...

Previous G1

Dealers said most investors remained reluctant to return to the market, worried about the political situation after the opposition called on President Gloria Arroyo to resign amid renewed allegations—which she denies—of fraud during last year's elections.

Coup rumors have also been circulating and dealers has-tened to fight back against those trying to topple her administration.

Financial markets will be closed on Monday after the government declared it a holiday. Trading resumes on Tuesday.

"The meltdown in the past three days was a bit overdone as technically, this rebound was expected," said Mark Alan Cantonero of Cantonerobox.com.

"But investors remain generally nervous because something may happen during the three-day week-end," he added, noting that the selling pressure may still hit at the latter part of yesterday's session. AFP

Let's drink to dad

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Bassot III

I'D LIKE I know what's bothering you (anguish of this "jarring" liberated republic...a direlemma) that, the national police and, based on all data toward of one whole day).

And that is, you must be wondering whether somebody really wins in the (SOO) multimillion peso jackpot prize called lotto.

Now, I am just looking at a copy of a recent privilege speech of this congressman from sugar land, Bacolod City Rep. Monico Puentevella.

He is saying that one winner of the P283 million peso lotto jackpot is the UK-based multinational company, called Kraft Foods.

There—it should ease your mind, if even the richest of rich of US multinational companies can win the lotto grand prize, so can you. Hopefully.

In parsing, in comparison, only relatives of government officials in the highest places are said to win the ... well, "monthly" jackpot.

***

ANYWAY, I am not sure if Puentevella is only trying to be funny. Perhaps he wants to take the place of the unsung stand-up comedian in town.

That is now other than Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye who, thanks to the jarring scandal, must appear on national television every night, telling us a new lie of jokes.

Puentevella claims that Kraft Foods already won the lotto jackpot, because the US multinational found a way to save tariff and duty payments worth some P686 million...so far.

For many years, you see, Kraft Foods used to make its "Tang" brand of powdered beverage mix here in the Philippines.

But three-one-four days, the company just decided to close its factory here, thus, in other-peso, not, left a lot of people suddenly jobless.

Kraft Foods, perhaps thought that it would actually make more money, if it would just import the same "Tang" from its factory in Thailand.

Anyway, based on the speech of Puentevella, the company already found a way to cut the tariff and duty rates on its powdered beverage mix.

And that's the P686 million JACKPOT!

***

UNDER an executive order issued by this town-in, known as EO 295, if you import something with a sugar content of more than 65 percent, you should pay for a tariff rate of 40 percent.

So, says Kraft Foods, last and To the US multinational company, its imported "Tang" should only pay a tariff of only 3 percent—for a savings of 37 percent. Hm.

Again, this EO 295 is an executive order. As Puentevella pointed out, it has the force of law, meaning, you can't mess with it, or else ...

But apparently Kraft Foods thinks that, as a multinational company, it does not have to follow the laws of the land.

In arguing its case against the Sugar Regulatory Administration, or the SRA, Kraft Foods insists that its importation does not fall under EO 295.

According to the Corleone executive order, the SRA determines the sugar content of the importations.

But Kraft Foods does not recognize the SRA's authority to challenge the "beautiful" tariff and duty rates, which it actually got from the Tariff Commission and the customs bureau.

Darn it boss, the rates are already so home to "Tang"!

In other words, everybody else must follow the executive order of Corleone, except Kraft Foods. Is that it?

***

FROM what I gathered, all the other importers of powdered beverage mix must pay a 15-percent tariff, if they are bringing in "finished" goods.

That is the decision of the SRA, just because he the importations of companies like San Miguel and Universal Robina.

But then Kraft Foods claims that it is not importing finished goods, but raw materials, meaning, it has to process the beverage mix from Thailand.

Now, the imported "Tang" that you can find in the stores today, actually, is contained in a re-milled "pouch," as against "can" or "bottle."

Word in the industry is that the closed/local factory of Kraft Foods, to begin with, never had the machines to pack the beverage mix in pouches.

It somebody pulling the leg of this cute ol-

***

UNFORTUNATELY for us, starting last year, the economic honcos were already releasing the "Tang" shipment of Kraft Foods from Thailand.

All Kraft Foods had to do was, well, pay up. I mean, not to somebody in customs bureau or the Tariff Commission, but in the form of a "bond."

Kraft Foods deposits the payment of tariff and duties, in the name of the customs, equivalent to a rate of 40 percent.

Later, if the Tariff Commission too decides to agree with Kraft Foods that, indeed, the rate should only be 3 percent, Kraft Foods will get the money.

According to Puentevella, that money now amounts to P600 million. That is the money that, he says, the current administration will lose, if Kraft Foods had its way.

And it looks that way, so far. I mean, based on the story related by Puentevella in his speech, Kraft Foods is about to get away with it a ... well, "lotto winnings."

***

PUENTEVELLA reveals that Kraft Foods imports Tang and Kool-Aid powdered juice from Thailand, which comes more than 99 percent sugar.

Despite EO 295 saying that such importation is subject to a 40 percent tariff, somebody in the Tariff Commission gave Kraft Foods a ruling to pay for only 3 percent.

(Its name is Alejandro Melchor, according to Puentevella.

The cynics, see, the Tariff Commission got made the "classification opinion" that gave Kraft Foods the 3 percent advantage over all the local makers of beverage mix.

And even at the customs bureau, according to Puentevella, somebody named Rufino Recto, a lawyer assigned at the bureau's "industries and classification review committee," never rising with the opinion of Melchor.

Blimik what?

Puentevella says that the customs committee made the decision without the knowledge of Customs Commissioner Red Lita. Birds. Really?

Uhmm, if such a big case, affecting not only several Filipino businesses but also the entire sugar industry, gets past the head of the bureau, something is wrong with the way he is running the freaking show.

***

WELL, the Tariff Commission and the customs bureau may make Kraft Foods a winner of P600-million lotto jackpot, the losers would surely be those five million—again, that's FIVE MILLION—members in the sugar industry.

The figure comes from Puentevella. Of course, as congressman from sugar land, he can be expected to bleat it.

But the thing is, whatever the actual figure is, we all know that the sugar industry is one of the biggest employers in that country.

Sugar is one of the leading products, if not THE leading products, in some 17 provinces.

To say it all, about 40 percent of local sugar industry serves industrial users, early on the majority of powdered beverage mix.

If these local makers can import "finished" goods at 3 percent tariff rates, as against 40 percent, they may as well just relocate to Thailand.

After all, such a decision will only lead to the complete collapse of the sugar industry. Everything stays as is, dear Kraft Foods, meanwhile, safe drink to that!

Now, Puentevella points out that, if Kraft Foods stops its Tang from Thailand to the US mainland, it will have to follow the Code TTIF classification.

That means that "Tang" contains more than 65 percent sugar, it must pay the corresponding tariff rates. "Without question," according to Puentevella.

But since Kraft Foods is only doing business here in the Philippines, he says, the US multinational can rest easy. Hay.

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* * *

ELECTED directors of **Filipino Pacific Inc.** were Bernardo Villegas, Yusi Cansen, Margaret Ang, Edward Go and Alfin Leonardo.

* * *

ELECTED directors of **Empire Holdings Corp.** were Oscar Lopez, Felipe Alfonso, Eugenio Lopez III, Manuel Lopez, Isaac Puruelo, Angel Ong, Washington Sycip and Vicente Paterno.

* * *

SUPERCITY Realty Development Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on June 20, 2:30 p.m. at the Richmonde Hotel, Pasig City. Only stockholders of record as of May 31 are entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting.

* * *

EASYCALL Communications Philippines Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on June 28, 10 a.m. at the Lighthouse Theater, Port Area, Manila. Only stockholders of record as of May 31 are entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting. **Compiled by Marilyn V. Rubio, PDI Research**

Gov't sees sale of PNB by Sept.

Front page B1

to interested buyers offer bids that are higher than what the group originally offered. But exercising its right of first offer also means that **the Lucio Tan group will have to automatically buy the PNB shares based on the lone price if there will be no other bidder.**

If the Lucio Tan group does not exercise its **right of first offer, it can still participate in the** bidding but only as a regular bidder.

The DOF said **the determination of the floor** price took into consideration PNB's earning **potential, based on its franchise, branch net**work and infrastructure, market share, and subsidiary base.

Purisima earlier said the government was bullish about selling PNB after it finally turned in a profit of P366 million in 2004, reversing the net loss of P15 billion to 2003.

For 2005, PNB said it expected a P604-million profit after tax income for the first quarter reached P151 million.

"We are confident we will be able to **maintain the pace we** achieved in the first quarter due to various factors, such as the resolution of our NPL (non-performing loans problem)," PNB president Omar Byron T. Mitra was earlier quoted as saying.

Purisima said the government was targeting to sell the PNB shares by September, when the shareholders' agreement between the government and the Lucio Tan group expires.

Exports jumped 8.8% in April

From page B1

the weaker-than-target performance of the export sector was an offshoot of the slowdown in the global economy. He cited the United States, **one of the Philippines' biggest export markets,** whose gross domestic product growth slowed to 3.1 **percent in the first quarter.**

He also said that demand from the United **States, Japan and Europe had decreased** early in the year partly due to cyclical reasons, as many foreign companies still had huge inventories. Many companies were also cutting down on other expenditures as they compensate for the still high cost of oil in the world market.

The NSO reported that following elections were articles of apparel and clothing accessories, which remained as the Philippines' second biggest export earner. These had a combined share of 4 percent, or $128.73 million, of the total export receipts for April. The figure was 5.8 percent lower than the $136.68 million a year earlier.

The country's other top exports for April were coconut oil, $92.35 million; blown fans, $60.12 million during the same period of 2004); ignition wiring set and other wiring sets used in vehicles, aircraft and ships, $50.78 million; lay-fans $39.23 million), and other products manufactured from materials imported on consignment basis, $49.69 million (up from $44.76 million).

The NSO also reported that the biggest export market for April was Japan, which accounted for $600.22 million of the total exports for the month. This was higher than last year's $547.66 million.

The United States was the second biggest export market, accounting for $539.55 million, or higher than the $443.48 million recorded a year ago. Michelle V. Rem-

US call center putting up regional hub in RP

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE COUNTRY'S bid to become the call center capital of the world was given a boost as a California-based call center solutions company chose the Philippines as its operational hub in Southeast Asia, an industry official said.

Tim Ruth, vice president of Five9 International Business Development Corp., yesterday said its Five9 Philippines—being a regional headquarters—would handle sales and marketing efforts in the entire region.

Ruth said Five9 was established the leading global provider of hosted contact center solutions for customer interaction management.

He explained that the firm's Virtual Contact Center, a fully hosted VOIP contact center system, enables companies of any size to build a comprehensive, feature-rich contact center anywhere in the world, without large capital investment.

"With the Five9 VCC, any company can rent contact center functionality over broadband Internet, within just five days, at more cost-effective means," Ruth said. "So up-front capital expense, no expensive infrastructure, no additional phone lines, no IT staff, and no special software and hardware required."

Ruth said Five9 VCC, which is currently used by over 4,000 agents worldwide, supports inbound, outbound and blended campaigns with interactive voice response, automatic call distribution, recording of calls, predictive dialer, voice mail, customer relationship management, call monitoring and reporting.

He said among the areas of the Five9 products were call center outsourcers, fund raisers and companies engaged in financial services, mortgage brokers, debt consolidators and banks 1, telemarketing, health care, home improvement, travel, and high tech industries.

Ruth said call center operators could start with as little as one seat, using the Five9 solutions.

"Internet can now bring call center work communities that have not been able to participate in this rapidly growing industry."

Ruth said the country has unique opportunities to become the customer care capital of the world since it was able to develop "storage" contact center across the archipelago.

"With the excellent language, communication and cultural skills of the people, the Philippines is an excellent location for customer support," he said.

Industry figures show that the IT-enabled services sector—including call centers—is expected to generate 30,000 new jobs annually next the next five years, up the Philippines competes with India and Canada as the capital of the $1.66-billion global customer care and business process outsourcing.

SM Investments registers 31% growth in profit

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SM Investments Corp. (SMIC), major Henry Sy's holding firm for his non-tax, banking and department store businesses, reported a 31-percent growth in its income to P5.20 billion in fiscal year ending March 31 from year-ago's P3.69-billion.

Consolidated revenues in 2005 amounted to P69.93 billion, or 18 percent higher than the 2004 figure of P62.17 billion. Costs and expenses rose by 21 percent in 2005 to P58.845-billion from P53.754-billion in 2004.

Net interest and other expenses decreased to P450 million in 2005 from P606 million in 2004.

The company also declared seventy cash dividends amounting to P1.05 billion, equivalent to P0.80 per share, for stockholders of record as of June 24. The dividend will be paid on July 29.

SMIC's major listed subsidiaries have also declared dividends recently. SM Prime Holdings Inc. declared a total of P1.2 billion in cash dividends. Banco de Oro Universal Bank and SM Development Corp. declared cash dividends amounting to P990 million and P240 million, respectively. China Banking Corp. declared cash dividends worth P1.278 billion and stock dividends of 35 percent.

PORIO POINT INFRA NETWORK
Baron Concession and Development Authority (BCDA) Chair Rhoda Bautista and Sen. Richard Gordon seal the think (pink) containing the blueprint of the 4.6-km road network to be developed in the Poro Point Commercial and Tourism Complex during the project's groundbreaking. The road network is expected to promote foreign and local investors and visitors better access to and from the tourism complex. This is a part of an P80-million package of infrastructure projects to be undertaken in the economic

VAT: There must be a better way to make laws

By Paul R. Cooper

(See p5 story)

ONE of the more interesting developments in the VAT bill is that the Senate and finance version of this bill both contained a "no pass through" provision for VAT on power, per the final bill currents issue. I have already indicated in my third article that this was one of the bright lines in the bicameral conference discussions. First, because the idea of a "no pass through" is entirely at odds with the objective of a VAT system, and second, because probably nobody could work out from the drafting of the bills how the rules should be interpreted in practice.

The second point—inability to interpret the drafting—is worth a closer look because it is the reason why VAT will be a major issue in the current legislative development process. We will focus on the sections in Senate Bill No. 1950, the non-penal portion of which reads:

"The VAT on the sale of electricity by generation companies, and services of transmission companies and distribution companies, as well as those of electric cooperatives and private electric utilities shall not apply to residential end-users. Provided, that the value-added tax herein levied shall be absorbed and paid by the generation, transmission and distribution companies concerned. The end companies shall not pass on such tax payments to Magtaon or ultimately to the end-users, including but not limited to residential end-users, either as cross or in any other form whatsoever, directly or indirectly."

It is not straightforward to derive a meaning for the proviso, as the language is ambiguous and the intent unclear. The key issue is the character of the purchase of electricity by residential end-users. When a residential end-user makes a payment to Meralco, for example, is it for the electricity sold by Meralco to the end-user, or has Meralco merely acted as a collection agent for the various parties involved in the supply chain? The proviso appears predicated on the principle that Meralco is merely a collection agent. However, it seems doubtful that a generation or transmission company would have recourse to the residential end-user in the event that the end-user defaults on a payment to the distribution company.

Residential end-users currently buy their electricity from distribution utilities. Section 25 of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 (Epira) refers to "the retail rates charged by distribution utilities for the supply of electricity in their domestic markets." The retail rate is defined to be "the total price paid by retail users consisting of the charges for generation, transmission and related ancillary services, distribution, supply and other related charges for electric service," while the supply of electricity is defined to mean "the sale of electricity by a party other than a generation or a distribution in the franchise area of a distribution utility using the wires of the distribution utility pursuant to open access."

Nothing in the Epira suggests that the transaction involving a distribution company and an end-user is anything other than a sale for the supply of electricity between two parties. Here the distribution company sources the electricity it needs to make the supply a non-material to the transaction with the end-user, and would be covered by separate transaction(s) with generation and transmission companies.

VAT's transactional nature as basis

Based on the transactional nature of the bill (an end-user buys power from a distribution company who in turn buys power from Napocor, etc.), there are several ways the language of the proviso might be interpreted.

- Under section 106, a 10 percent VAT is "levied, assessed and collected" on "gross receipts derived" from the sale or exchange of services." The section then enumerates a number of specific services "performed or rendered by" persons that are subject to VAT. Consequently, electricity sales made by residential end-users will not be subject to output tax. Extending to exempt the supply of electricity to residential end-users, the proviso should read, "... not apply to the supply of electricity to residential end-users."

- Breaking the words "the supply of electricity to" into the proviso, only the supply transaction with the residential end-user would be exempt. As noted, the VAT is a transaction-based tax and end-users transact not only with distribution companies and franchise grantees. When the residential end-user to contract directly with generation, transmission and distribution companies to effect their power supply, however, the whole supply would not be subject to VAT.

Agency model as basis

If one accepts that a residential end-user is, by VAT purposes, being charged separately by the generation, transmission and distribution companies:

- The first part of the proviso appears to exempt any power earmarked for residential end-users from the VAT, although the expression "shall not apply" arguably might be interpreted to zero-rate the sales. At a practical level though, it is not clear how companies solely in the supply chain would apply the VAT rate, given that they transact with residential and commercial customers a determined cost to at the distribution company stage.

- The second part appears to be a nonsense rule—if the first part exempts residential end-users, presumably there is no "value-added tax ... levied" and many to be "absorbed and paid by the generation, transmission and distribution companies concerned."

Crystallizing policy issues

The question at the heart of the confusion over how the provisions should be interpreted is, "What was the Senate trying to achieve? Was it seeking a backdoor route to impose tax on independent power producers (IPPs), which might explain the reference in the proviso to "the said companies shall not pass on such tax payments to Napocor?" Or was the Senate concerned with how it should reduce the overall tax burden on the Epira power industry and/or should be borne by residential end-users. If it were the latter, the policy options would be:

- Damage sales to residential consumers: A point noted frequently in Senate debates was that residential end-users already pay VAT on their power, to the extent it is used by VAT-registered businesses as an input to their business. Consequently, if one wants to collect VAT up to system in the supply chain (e.g., the sale of power to distribution companies) but to exempt the value added at the distribution level, introducing an exemption in Section 109 (1)(r) for the "supply of electricity by a residential end-user" should be adequate.

- Zero-rate sales to residential customers for direct consumption: If Congress wanted to relieve residential end-users from the burden of VAT, it would be necessary to zero-rate the supply of electricity to a residential end-user.

Conclusion

The key point to be drawn from this discussion is that there are two steps in making effective law. First, one should make a judgment about the policy goals to be achieved. In this case, the issue should have been exactly what has been said to be placed on consumers whose VAT was made subject to VAT. Second, one should get a tax specialist to draft provisions to give effect to the policy intent. One reason the "no pass through" provision is difficult to interpret is the apparently assumed overarching presumption that Meralco collects VAT on behalf of Napocor, a majority to agent for generation and distribution companies, rather than as the principal in a transaction involving the supply of electricity.

If Congress could be encouraged to debate the policy issues, rather than the specific drafting of provisions, then would be less risk that unforeseen law will result at the end of the process.

The key to effective policy design is to develop the policy up front, and then to obtain agreement on the policy parameters from key stakeholders before a bill is tabled in the House of Representatives. The greater the transparency in the policy parameters, the more effective the consultative process will be. The more consultation that can be undertaken before a bill is introduced, the better quality that bill is likely to have. One of the problems faced by participants in the current process is that it is not always entirely clear where a bill is headed until it is passed, or the various intricacies are undertaken.

Who are the key stakeholders? The Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Department of Finance are two agencies that should play important roles in driving the integrity of the VAT system. The policymakers also have an important role to play; an appropriate commitment at the right moment can avert a government away from a measure that otherwise might be disastrous, or might help refine a provision so that the government still obtains its objective, but in a manner imposing far less cost on taxpayers.

Then there is Congress. But is always going to be a complex area, meaning that many congressmen and senators may need to take on-mass representations made by colleagues more familiar with the tax laws. The key may be to identify the issues that are of such priority that business lobbies with tax policy and administration issues. Section 209 of the Tax Code already provides for just such a group—the congressional oversight committee consisting of five senators and five congressmen—to monitor the implementation of the Code. Although it has not been very active since its inception in 1986, the committee has been sanctioned to date, but administration shortcomings highlighted in the recent VAT bill may encourage the chairs of the ways and means committee to review that status.

Ironically, the committee could represent the easy lateral. If the members can overcome their reluctance to be forced policy matters to be followed for a prospective tax bill, and then delegate the drafting to persons specializing in the technical application of tax law, it should be possible to manage a tax bill through. Congress embrace it becoming politically divisive in the process. After all, five members from each Chamber represent a significant proportion of the members that ultimately should participate in the bicameral process. It makes for a very strong block to ensure the bill is managed effectively through the process.

Who's with me to rethink the Tax Code into plain English?

Dr. Cooper is a tax expert and a director of PricewaterhouseCoopers.

BUSINESS

Flying V, Seaoil raise oil prices by 50¢/liter

By Abigail L. Ho

FOLLOWING the lead of their bigger counterparts, Flying V and Seaoil Philippines Corp. yesterday jacked up prices of their gasoline, diesel and kerosene by 50 centavos a liter.

Eastern Petroleum Corp. led the pack of independent oil companies, implementing its price hike at noon Thursday.

Flying V followed suit at 1 a.m. yesterday, while Seaoil effected higher pump prices on the same day.

Big 3 oil firms Petron Corp., Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. and Caltex Philippines Inc. hiked prices first, led by Shell at noon on Wednesday, followed by Petron at 4 p.m. and Caltex at 12:01 a.m. the next day.

Since the start of the year, oil firms have jacked up gasoline prices nine times, for a total hike of P4.80 a liter, and diesel fuel 10 times by a total of P3.05 a liter.

Pump prices of gasoline now reside at between P30.80 and P31.31 a liter, diesel at between P26.60 and P26a liter, and kerosene at between P28.20 and P29 a liter.

The oil firms all cited the escalating prices of oil in the world market as the reason for the recent pump price increase.

To mitigate the impact of the new price hike on the public transport sector, however, the oil firms all committed to maintain diesel discounts of at least 75 a liter for public utility vehicles.

World oil prices began to climb again with the advent of the summer driving season in the US.

According to the Department of Energy, the regional benchmark Dubai crude rose to a June 1-8 average of $49.13 a barrel, more than $6 higher than the May average of $45.39 a barrel.

The price of unleaded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) bellwether refined petroleum product likewise climbed to $55.90 a barrel in the first eight days of June, up by more than $5 a barrel from the May average of $50.40 a barrel.

MOPS-based diesel also surged to a June average of $54.23 a barrel, more than $5 a barrel higher than the $48.76 a barrel average last month.

PROTESTERS pull a passenger jeep during a recent demonstration in front of a gasoline station in Quezon City. More protests are expected as both the oil companies again raising their prices yet by 50 centavos a liter

Super

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The double life of a wordsmith

The fever, the men, the lies, and the secrets of a reluctant 'writer'

OUT THE WINDOW

Tais Diaz

ANYBODY people used to be so much nicer before.

All I had to do was shut off my mobile phone for a day and hope that the time lapse would deflect any unwanted calls or text messages coming in. It used to be the perfect excuse: "Sis, called! Sorry, my phone was off. Too bad I didn't get the invite to your all-you-can-eat vegetable dinner party last night. Must've been...freaky good."

It's a bit more complicated these days. With call-back features and funky windows zooming popping up on your computer screen while you're online, it's not that easy to convince anyone anymore that you didn't receive their messages.

I was recently faced with this precarious situation after a not-too-favorable second date. He encapped me with the dreaded question, "Why aren't you taking my calls?" So I had to resort to either one of two options: A) telling this person to his face the simple truth, that though he was damn good looking, I don't usually savor the company of anyone who spits outside my car window, urinates outside a restaurant or drinks Shinsharin to a Japanese dialect. Or B) blatantly lying to him by stating that I've been assigned to cover the price increase of cars in Bolivia. Oh, wait, there's a third option: selling myself to get rich and bedridden with a high fever. So I chose the most logical alternative: I sold myself to get rich and bedridden with a high fever. It was so much easier than telling the painful truth or telling an outright lie. (And by Jupiter's mucous, I realized it was the best excuse for avoiding people.)

Why is telling people the truth isn't always a beautiful thing.

It's no strange irony that for someone whose main preoccupation is balancing the equations of words, I have such a hard time telling people to their faces exactly what I think. Just such that—when push comes to shove, I actually do have a knack for telling people to their faces exactly what I think. More than a few times that had ended up really ugly, like zeroed to tears and almost-fights. That is precisely why I'm afraid of face-to-face confrontations that end up as a battle of honor swords. (Or if they're knives, I know exactly which ones to throw. And trust, it sucks hunting people that way, even if what you've said—not loud was the honest truth.

Of course, I'm not always surrounded in confrontations. There are times that call for the biting of the tongue, or the coating of words to make them more digestible. Yet many times I find those moments to be just as ugly for even as the victim doesn't end up screwed in tears or threats, they end up marked in emotional angst. And we all know what too much unfeelability can do to you.

That is why I often will regard to get a lover. The lover of writing. But I've found writing to be so much more honest than talking or keeping silent.

Then I stopped recoiling at the title "writer."

I've had this fever for practically my whole life, but ironically it's only been these past two years with Inquirer that I've had a few more people asking about my incurable ailment. (As of late, I'm up to a total of five but now, including my mother, shooting!) I absolutely relate with what my (female) American idol Gabrielle Garcia Marquez once wrote: "I can be careful until I'm a hundred years old if I can write. My subject is life and the subject gets larger the longer I live." Scratch that, I liked even better what he shared in his autobiography, "Vivir Para Contarla": "If you can imagine life without writing, you're not a real writer."

This is how I eventually came to call myself, without flinching, a "writer." I used to just tell people who ask me what I do (at least when I'm not selling mustachios of "Lord") that "I write." For when I think of the word "writer," what comes to mind is the exclusive, badass membership of Dumas, Tolkien, Rizal, Calvino, Garcia Marquez, Bulfinch, Rizal and de Quiros to name a few. To call myself a "writer" was something I thought reeked of pretentiousness, or pretentiousness than I could be filed under the same general category as those greats, unless I refer to as the nuns in my life.

I've wondered often enough do real artists call themselves "artists," or truly talented poets refer "Poet" in their résumés? It wasn't so much that I required the endorsement of the general reading public, but more like I needed the approval of my harshest critic: myself. Just as a musician cannot possibly think of living without music, or an artist cannot live without creating something beautiful, the

THE FINISH IS ON

Breakdowns and breakthroughs

Be thankful for your past and know that your future can be completely independent of it

By Katrina Hodgson
Original artwork by Jason Phua

WE ARE all subject to moods. Being human, we're not expected to perpetually be even tempered, light and bubbly, no matter our choice of beverage. When asked about this some blame the weather, others the immediate surroundings, and for the Freud loving, the past. Nothing can equal a good old fashioned rant and rave. It sometimes feels super to cuss out loud, to think violent thoughts about your worst enemy (or best friend) or plot the annihilation of bus drivers in the metropolis.

The point is, we all risk lose at one time or another and we say and think *awful* things. Even if we know we have to rise up from our pit of darkness and go forward, swallowing as misery and self pity can be comforting. At least when you're at the bottom of the heap, you know exactly what you are. Right? (Pass me the potato please.)

In *Bridesmaids* Rebbinzi (yes the gorgeous one in Hollow Hill) book, *Rainbow the Unicorn Within*, he points to two triggers that are crucial in our decision making process. These are: Pleasure and Pain – five lines of the Saudi state troops, The Agony and the Ecstasy.

Avoid pain

The majority choose to avoid pain. This avoidance sometimes leads to denial, and denial can then lead to disease (and I don't just mean in the physical sense). Pain and pleasure are of course subjective. I have seen grown men sink their fists for the pleasure of the thrill of jumping out a perfectly good aeroplane… and then cower and quiver in fear at the sight of a teeny tiny needle aimed at their rear end. A woman will allow herself the agony of hunger in order to feel skinny when she easily slips into her little black dress.

These are examples on a simplistic plane, what I would like to focus on has much deeper roots. Pain is up to a person's perception, and when it is put to a positive light (positive?) it can actually lift you to a whole new level. How so? Look at it this way. We all have lovers. Some I admit, more than others. Issues can be reworked as baggage or flaws.

Unless you are one of the enlightened ones (i.e. NOT Arabic), the very thought of facing one's fears is as scary as a fireball gone bad. We all have to choose which path to take in life, be it school, major, job, romantic partner or lifelong partner. Subconsciously (think about it once in hindsight) we actually weighed the pain-pleasure principle before making our decision.

When we do not acknowledge what brings us pain, then we will not know what will consistently give us pleasure. Do you notice how you often have "blanks" from the past? Situations, people, songs, blurs from movies that make you recall (and recoil at) unpleasant and re-traumatic memories?

Influenced by a memory

Let me make this clearer. You will know that you are still being influenced by a memory (in a free) if you still react on it in a negative, even hateful manner. The mutual hate not limited and instead of finding out its true cause, you choose to ignore it. When you see the former love of your life walking in the mall hand in hand with your former best friend and the first thing that springs to mind is bloodbath… then you noticed this experience will affect your outlook on your future relationships, both in love and in friendship. Instead of moving up you slide back down. It is a crappy feeling not wanting to trust anyone again, especially yourself and your taste!

Can you relate? Look, I'm not saying that your bone-head ex and your equally bone-headed ex friend should be canonised. I'm just saying that they are still alive (Why God, WHY?) to REMIND you of what you really feel. As one of my favorite authors wrote, "Stop refusing to acknowledge what life is showing you about yourself." Ouch.

When you go on subscribe automatic-mode, at some point you're going to have a breakdown. Set yourself free from the trainwreck that ensues you (and they always ensue when you least expect them, making it doubly harder) and have a pain-"breakthrough" instead.

The Koran believe that if you really want to get over something (like an obsession) then you either drop it completely or immerse yourself with it. This is going to sound very unpalatable but try to drown yourself in the feeling of disgust, hatred, anger etc., etc., you feel towards person A or situation A. Drowning you wake up, and you are no longer affected. Why? Because you've had *up with feeling like…* (your navel here).

The word independence is synonymous with freedom. Starting right now, be thankful for your past and know that your future can be completely independent of it. It's time for a breakthrough. Happy Independence Day!

Who da pirate?

Text and collage by Pepe Diokno

RIOT before Star Trek Enterprise on NBC, I saw this ad that said, "If you think it's wrong to steal cars, and bags, and money, it's just as wrong to buy pirated." Piracy is theft," —or something like that. The ad is part of the IIP (Hence Intellectual Property) campaign of the Intellectual Property Office of Singapore.

And cool, piracy is theft. And it's disastrous—big-method? (Dahn, echo) The ad pictures a bank of suspect for an artist's intellectual property as the source of the piracy problem. And I agree. But the problem is, who has the right to talk about honoring intellectual property in the first place?

Sure! What are record companies and movie studios? Artists? Composers who make money off other people's creations and put profit as their top priority do not honor intellectual property. Record companies aren't on this earth for the music...they're here for money. Same goes with movie studios. When these corporations ask you to stop buying pirated, they're really just asking you to give them more money. Don't mind them.

But! What is the government? Wrong again. We pay 1/3 of our annual income to our government—and they tax us for everything we buy—and at least more than half of the revenue they get goes into the pockets of these movies, blockbuster, blockbuster (and the people who make up their fake numbers).

The government is full of people with individual interests. These people make their money off of your work and my work. They fund off us. They have no right to lecture us about honoring intellectual property. If they did, they'd respect us enough to show us where I (1) of our income goes. When the government asks you to stop buying pirated, they're really just asking you to fund their own scandal.

We're all pirates!

So it turns out that the main proponents of anti-piracy campaigns aren't in the position to talk to us about intellectual property rights in the first place. They're pirates themselves. The real message of the "We're Piracy" monologue is, "Give this fat businessman more—or! And, "Give this corporation her some change." It's kinda like the US Government saying they have to kill terrorists when they themselves strike terror in the hearts of little Arab children, among others.

Abraham is behind all this anti-piracy crap. If there weren't any money in music and movies, we wouldn't have an Oprah Media Board and Intellectual Property Office.

Look—in the end, when piracy is, um, eradicated, the ones who will benefit are, first the record companies and movie studios, then the government. The artists get the crumbs. (Like, remember when TLC said they were bankrupt? Anyway...)

Victims!

The victims of piracy are the artists themselves. They're victims of you and me buying CDs worth P60 each and downloading stuff off the net, yes. But they're also victims of executives and politicos feeding on their talent. Everyone's trying to get a piece of these artists, but they're the poorest ones around. People don't realize that the artist is the basic form of life. (Like planet.)

It's typical of Filipino society to look down on the building blocks of society. The labor sector, for example, is regarded with as much respect in this country as, say, rape. They get paid the lowest, but work the hardest—they work their asses off for two and nah. And then we laugh at the thought that if all of them died of starvation, none of us will survive (it's possible.)

This opinion of society is a sickness—and it's one of the reasons why our country will never improve. The day we start giving truck drivers and janitors their due is the day we will develop—my cups of that happening, ninever? Uh, sorry). This is a sickness and a problem.

Piracy on the other hand is a sickness but it isn't the problem. It's ulcer, tell...) the way we think. A lack of respect for (or knowledge of) intellectual property is a major part of the piracy issue. A lack of respect for the people who actually do the work is another problem. Our national leaders' being out of touch with the way 10 percent of our country lives is another major problem. Unless we change the way we think, the Philippines—and all Filipinos, for that matter—is destined to ruin ruin.

The way we Filipinos think contributes to the one big word we pray to God (or Allah, or the Inori, or Buddha—it doesn't matter) to get rid of...poverty.

Poverty

Piracy will never be expelled from this region unless something is done about poverty. And to try to solve piracy and pay attention to IP rights are futile when most Filipinos can't eat.

Former Gov. ORR chairman Ada Marasigan arrives in an expensive car at a show area in Cubao—or some other place. He makes his way to a fitness stage and delivers a speech. "I know you people only make P80 a day, which isn't even enough to feed yourself let alone your family, but please, if you want to enjoy the music of Sarah Geronimo, do not use her just for days, and buy a P250 original CD!"

Now they won't be able to enjoy Sarah Geronimo. (Aww...) So the argument is that if you can't buy something, you can probably live without it. If you can't buy CDs, too bad.

But any musician will say that music is life. And any filmmaker will tell you that film is the foremost medium of expression that everybody needs.

The people who make the products that are pirated most often will say that their creations are essential to life. It is the endless politics who doesn't get that, and will say that music is an unnecessary expense.

The point is you cannot tell people who are underpaid they, even minimum wage is below what is needed to keep a family alive) to spend a whole month's salary on music. But at the same time, you cannot deprive a person of music.

Demand, supply, solution

But you're right. There's no excuse, (but not reason) of artists against piracy. But the least we can do is know what we're attacking. It's not the supply of pirated products, but the demand of them that we should eradicate. See, if people want something, they're going to find ways to get it. There's only our officials do are like gamers of whack-a-mole. (If you see something come up, whack it! (oops, there's another one! Whack it!)

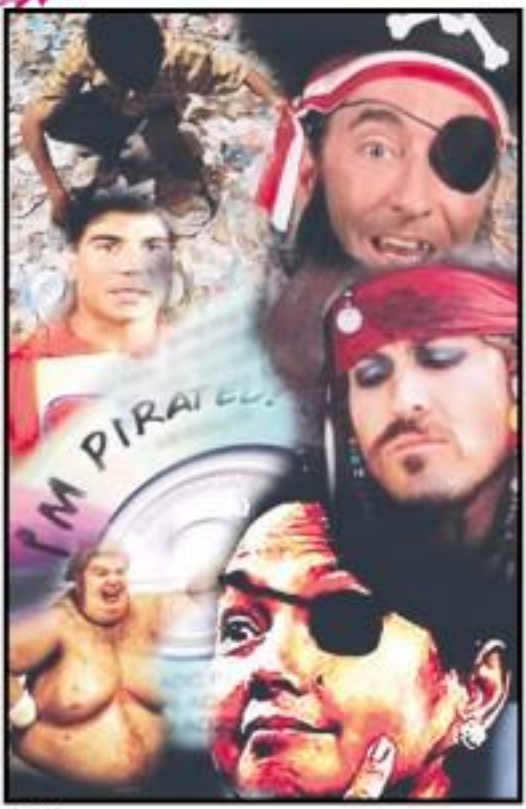
The solution is to address the demand for pirated products. Record companies and movie studios have to show us that they put music and movies before profit. (Now that is third, but telling people to respect artists' rights while being after the money themselves is hypocritical.) And the government should put more effort into realizing long-term goals like speeding up the justice system, fixing the Labor Code, and decentralizing powers, and become less involved in short-term problems like the operation at the back of Malacañang.

And third, the artists have to be aware of blood-sucking from all directions. Though it is hard to survive without controlling with and giving into the companies that distribute your work, people must realize that these corporations need you. The people who create must band together and stand up for (what's) rotting) their rights. Unit like People Power ... or something.)

These "Say No To Piracy" drives are nothing but crap—they're there but no one minds them. They're there but they don't solve the main issues that cause piracy. The money used for a 30-second spot about intellectual property can be used to put people to school and educate them even better about rights, and proper consumerism. Grey, no-no-t

Piracy is theft. And all of us are guilty of it—we're all guilty of living off somebody else's work. But then, piracy isn't the problem. The problem is that our society is sick, and that our country is poor. Said that, freaks.

Comments at pepediokno@gmail.com



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The double life of a wordsmith

From page 01

moment I imagined life without writing and only one in my mind's eye an unhappy girl... I know I was a hurry writer.

When a fertile imagination is not discovery.

The first story had to do with a green light outside my window. That was a long, lonning time ago. I was still a little kid deprived of sleep in the midnight hour. Suddenly an eerie green light had flashed for a creepy second outside my room. It was enough to wake a me at terror inside me, so I ran crying to my father. Instead of telling me that the green light was either something I had dreamt of or that it was from the headlights of a passing car, my father told me... to write about it. To write a story for myself. It was his remedy to allay my fears. That was my very first, and perhaps my very best, lesson in writing.

I wrote a story that I wanted to read. It was honesty to its most organic route as I tried to capture the very real emotions, the genuine fear, that I felt. It was honest because in the story, there came alive the Reffler and green ghosts and love fairies that I believed to be part of my world back then. It was indeed the most liberating feeling; my first taste of real freedom.

Okay, so "The Green Light" may not have been a bestseller; there were simply not enough copies in print (that one copy of mimeographed pages were read only by my two adoring fans, my mom and dad). Still, it there was ever a time that would stand out to my life when I thought of myself as a true writer, it was, and still is, that moment. Writing about that green light I saw Out the Window.

Celebrate 10 Super! years of Preview

WE'RE not the only ones celebrating an anniversary.

Ten years ago, Leah Peyot, Raymund Lumsda and Myrna Ilano realized a vision to bring the most innovative styles to once unfortunate looking-to-salons their hunger for artistic dressing with a lip, young fashion magazine which also serves as a website for a new generation of artists seeking creative expression. Former Preview Editors Billy Go, Tina Imelda and Joyce Tan Diego were among the indi-blinds who helped make Preview what it is now. Now, with Pauline Suaco-Juan at the helm, Preview continues to celebrate personality, encouraging hip, young blends to be fashion forward.

Flip through a decade of fabulous features, stunning images and the brightest talents in the Philippine fashion scene in Preview's 12th An-

niversary Special. Stuffed with over 80 pages of fashion & beauty editor's ink, it's their biggest issue ever! Check out Manila's 100 IT list—the most happening women to walk it out in.

And what's a birthday without a blowout—they're giving away prizes from Bottega Veneta, Ezra Spade, Gucci, Prada, Ted's and TSL. Two lucky ones will win a P50,000 shopping spree at VSC!

Get your copy which features Jinx Alonso, Iza Calzado, Alessandra de Rossi, Anne Curtis, Maxie Rodriguez, Sienya Gonzalez, Olivia Cuppa, Malibu Rivera, Kat Alano and Cheska Garcia. The limited edition of Preview encrusted with Swarovski crystals, is now available in magazine stands and bookstores at P100.

SuperFerry, truly a happy trip!

SuperFerry launched its new generation vessels – 11, 10, 16, 17, 18 and 19 – the newest and most modern in the SuperFerry fleet, to answer the increasing demand of the leisure travel market. More than ever, these vessels promise a happy trip!

Now, SuperFerry further strengthens its relations with suppliers and agents in tourist destination countries, which targets the family, young professionals and students, as well.

Sail Away to your dream vacation onboard the SuperFerry!

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Enjoy a vacation that combines the pleasure of a SuperFerry journey and the excitement of the islands through the Sail Away packages!

Maintaining its success, SuperFerry continues to offer special tour packages, with a seafare that is inclusive of hotel accommodation of choice—making it a most comprehensive holiday treat.

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For convenience! Sail Away packages and other details, visit www.SuperFerry.com.ph or call Group Sales at 528-7150.

Moisture is the essence of wetness, and wetness is the essence of beauty

Image master Xander Angeles fulfills his liquid dreams with an exhibit that will leave you drenched

By Pam Pastor

HOW MANY times can you use water as a metaphor?

More many times—and you'd realize this even more if you talk to photography master Xander Angeles about "Drenched," his latest exhibit.

Xander preps onlooker to the very thing that keeps us alive with photographs that are ever-changes of life itself. The exhibit is of 46 unpublished photos showcase different moods—two in various levels of wilderness. "I wanted to paint these portraits in a very surreal, abstract and effected kind of way... you don't know if they're coming out of another dimension. I was so inspired with drooling underwears. It's the fulfillment of my liquid dreams."

The photos are beautiful, yes, they are, but for Xander, they're not just about capturing aesthetics.

"They represent my state of being. I'm taking the plunge in, to something unknown, I'm diving into something new, something outside my comfort zone."

He's talking about recent developments in his career—his latest interest.

He filmed four commercials in the past month and is set to shoot a movie this year. And that's just the start. He's also going to the US in July to take photographs for a New York-based magazine and has a shoot for another international magazine under way.

"I'm drenched in passion, emotion and inspiration," he said.

And if you see his photographs, we think you'd be drenched too.

The exhibit is presented by Esse and sponsored by Pepsi XXL and Olympus. Catch "Drenched" at the Mesh Shop of the Powerplant Mall at Rockwell today and tomorrow.

Nakaka 'nginiig': the senseless death of Luigi Santiago

No one is safe from violence. Not even you

By Tim Tiu

I LEFT Vhar at 3 a.m., thinking that the happening was over. An hour after, I got a text message from Nick Gambino telling my that his brother Luigi Santiago got shot and is now dead.

Apparently, a multiple shooting incident that has rocked the boomers quickly erupted. The fight continued outside and some guys who were the friends of the girls intervened and it became a free-for-all.

Someone started shooting indiscriminately and took off.

Innocent bystander

Luigi, an innocent bystander, was killed. He had tried to stop the fight and instead had his life stopped. Five other people I know were injured.

It felt weird reading the Metro section of the paper the other day seeing names of people I had just said goodbye to the night before.

There was Ryan, a girl I met in Cubao X who I'm sure has dancing skills. A leather vest thought her time. There was Theo, the girlfriend of my favorite DJ, who got shot in the thigh. Ariel, who had despised earlier that night and was on his way home got hit in his left hip. Charlene, who is everybody's friend got shot in her right foot.

I found myself at Santuario de San Antonio Parish, where the usual party-scared area fully persons. This time they weren't in same race or field gathering, they were there to console the family of Luigi, a television director and seems Sunny who had touched many lives.

Last respects

It was evident in the people who showed up during the first night of his wake—a mixture of more and television stars, friends and family who have come to pay their last respects.

The ironic thing is that Luigi Santiago's life revolved around the afterlife. Many knew of his work as director of Studio 23's "Inquiring."

When not "pestering his guest patients for it," evening, he was like any other twenty-seven year old—he basked in his success, loved playing this game called "Sweet", hoped for a better future and had great faith in the world and is people.

His friendster profile, which eerily enough, he last logged into the night before his death, read, "What I want to meet? Jesus in people."

At the wake, the shock of Luigi's brother Nick obliterated any other feeling I could have felt. My only thought was, "This Ahh shit."

It was unimaginable...the partygoing are were no longer having fun. A senseless act of violence had ended this gay bi-day party.

It's current. Every time we hear news about kids in the US-bi-hoping weapons to school and pointing their brothers and classmates down, we think, that would never happen here. But it does happen. Maybe not to these same bad actors, in the streets, in the public outside you just rode yesterday but always with guns—with knives, with punches, even with baseball swords.

Anger-infested

In an anger-infested world, no one is safe from violence. No one. Not movie stars, not students, not artists, not journalists, not your parents, not you.

But you can choose not to be part of the violence.

Anger kills. Hate kills. And violence kills. You don't have to wait for the rest of the world...it begins with you.

Stop the violence. Stop rape.

GONE TOO SOON. Your friends will miss you, Luigi.

Luigi, an innocent bystander, was killed. He had tried to stop the fight and instead had his life stopped

Upon losing someone

By Nick Gambino

Hi.

Sunday. We're visiting my grandmother in the province. She's the last grandparent we have left and her health not exactly the greatest. We have to spend time with her. My brother's shoot for the day is cancelled so he actually makes it out. We are driving on the linear parts of her house and I call my brother on ate, she just became in the Philippines, he's somewhat of a celebrity." Especially in the provinces.

"You're on ate," I say.

"Why?"

"Come a 60-year-old woman just walked halfway across town to get your autograph. Seriously, imagine you asked if she was normal."

"She's just being nice."

"Who's having your butt and you're having it."

He chuckles. Yes.

Four hours later, he has enough of the lack of air conditioning—the humidity—so that it feels like you're walking through pudding. We kinsay my grandmother goodbye, and we head back to Bacolor and drive back to the city.

It's a long ride home from the province and he had already finished flipping through his "Pickup, pimp shoulder" magazines so he took out mine instead. He asked me to take to read the book I'm reading.

"I should have brought a book, too," he says.

I fall asleep in the middle of an oncoming typhoon. He gets a text message from reading in the car. We go to his apartment and he gives me his cell phone. "I just got a new one," he adds. He's always getting new things. He's successful and makes good money. I am successful but I don't make good money. I check out the phone and realize that he's got almost 60 pictures of himself on there. And his silent clock time is the voice saying "Wake up, o'mae, get up" for almost 5 minutes.

Narcissist. Typical him.

We play Xbox and he asks me if I want to go to church with him. I decline because I have a birthday dinner to attend. He drops me off at my apartment and his comes up to because he has to fall time before mass starts. Plus, he had to "go number 2." I remember him rambling into my bathroom. I remember that clearly. I have no remember that.

The next day, Monday, he texts me, "Where you?" "Nothing, I say. He reply back.

Tuesday. He texts me, "Ate + a up 17" looking, I say to be doing anything? He doesn't know yet. I'll tell me later though.

I spend that evening at an awards show. I should can I have already done. I bring some bottles home to a bar and it's been a good time. I'm a good kid, though. I know I have work the next day so I leave the bar/lounge at the bar. I walk back and get home by 1:30 a.m. I take a shower to wash away the filthy stink of sweat reinforcing my body. As I get out, I have missed six phone.

Text 1: "Ate, come out to the bar. Bro all hurt"—Mark

Reply: "Who. I just came from there. Hanging. Drink"

Text 2: "Who?"—My brother

Reply: "I'm in bed already."

I set my cellphone alarm for 8 a.m. I read most of the book that he started reading. I'm 200 pages ahead of him. The pages get blurry in 15 minutes, I'm fast asleep.

RING!

I look at my phone. It's 6:30 in the morning. Why is Mark calling me? I silence the phone and go back to sleep.

RING!

I see on silent mode the phone rattles my nightstand. The buzzing probably even louder than my ring tone. It's Mark again. I reject the call and close my eyes.

RING!

I start to think. There's only one reason that Mark would call me at 6:30 in the morning when he knows I'm sleeping—he got in to a fight. It had better be serious, I think. I call him back.

There are a few things you can say to a person that are guaranteed to make them go crazy and break out of their minds. You could say "Your house is on fire" or maybe "There's a snake under your bed" or maybe even, "There's an axe killer from the 23rd floor of a building and it's headed straight for your head!"

But the one that's sure to have them ripping their hair out of their heads is this:

Mark: "Uyah, stay calm, don't freak out. OK, bro..."

And the calm response:

Me: "What? What the FRUIT's happening?!"

You can prepare for a worst case scenario in your mind, you think you've already thought of it, but you'll never know how you'll react when faced with "hell." And hell came in the following words—each one heart one-by-one. Slowly. Like an icicle forming.

GO TO OUR LIFESTYLE SOUR

SIBLINGS. Sending believers Luigi and another fella a

I cry. And cry. And cry. I hug my brother's cold body and pretend I'm just sleeping next to him

WRITER WAS SAVE

Then that icicle falls off from the morning of "arrow you" and sinks you through the heart. And even in the midst of a surgical scenario, what I hear those words, I never feel awake in my life.

In the car to the hospital, I talk to God and try to hold back the tears from my eyes. I tell Heather to not cuss in all my good deeds right now and completely throw away anything I've ever asked for and forget to bless me in the future just to make sure that my brother's okay. My face shows. My bottom lip shakes. I drive, incessantly. Windscreen up.

I park right in front of the E.R. My friend Kath greets me. Gives us an inappropriate meet in this situation, because all I hear is HE'S GONE.

I probably go all schizoid-ic at this part. Blame bumbling. Whatever. All that part I don't remember. My friends, who were at the club when my brother was there, are at the hospital. I probably look like garbage because no one says anything to me. Then again, I'd have to be the one to tell someone that their brother had just been killed.

Shot 1—experience what is probably the hardest thing I've ever been through in my life. I look for my brother. And when I see him, I die. I die into a mess of flesh and uncontrollable slop—my friends can't keep me up.

But a minute later, I'm fine. My eyes are dry. I know why. Because I have to call home and tell my parents. This is the hardest phone call I'll ever make in my life.

I have my mother scream like I've never heard before. I hear my father wail. I've never heard my father wail.

They arrive at the hospital and my other brother (12 years old) lets out a scream so heart-wrenching (in case that someone in the hospital suffered a heart attack, his didn't understand). He was just awake up in the middle of the night by his crying parents and brought to a place to see his oldest brother. Dead.

I, on the other hand, am a picture of composure and calm. I provide the "keep your head focus, stopping my pain and loss deeper with each hand movement. I arrange to have his remains cremated. It's a divorce after all. He has grown eyes.

My younger brother and I volunteer's duties to keep the body warm. My mother has his head in her arms and rocks to him. My father is at his feet. We do this for hours. Family members and friends come and go. And at 4:00 a.m., the alarm on my cell phone goes off. I hear my brother's voice. "Wake up! C'mon, get up!"

I cry. And cry. And cry. I hug my brother's cold body and pretend I'm just sleeping next to him.

"I DREW up with my guy."

They take him to be autopsied. I mean, he was murdered.

I'm home. I have no one to talk to anymore. My eyes are crisscrossed. I have no energy left in my body. So I'm here. Typing.

I answer phone calls from concerned people. I open to the police about the investigation. They haven't found the shooter yet. Please police. Just put him behind bars. Please.

My fingernails are red as I'm typing on this keyboard. My hands are caked with his blood.

But room to on my admin check. The last book he read but never finished is on my bed. I'm engrossed his browsed through while using my bathroom is still sitting there.

I must know what it's like to have someone close to you die. It's a pain I wish on no one.

It's it is a better place now. But he's not here with me.

Luigi. My brother. My best friend.

Ok, I figure I'll live to that age. But seriously Luigi, how am I gonna go through the next 50 years without you?